DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 844 PS 014 450

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TITLE Six-Month Evaluation of the Maryland Day Care Voucher Demonstration. [and] Code of Maryland Regulations 07.02.15: Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 88A, Subsection 32D-32H, Family Day Care.
INSTITUTION Bell (James) and Associates, Inc., Arlington, VA.
SPONS AGENCY Maryland State Dept. of Human Resources, Baltimore.
PUB DATE Mar 84
CONTRACT SSA/DC-07/83-001
NOTE 117p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Day Care; Demonstration Programs; Early Childhood Education; Educational Innovation; *Educational Vouchers; *Family Day Care; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Questionnaires; State Legislation; *State Programs; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS Family Day Care Registration; *Maryland; *State Regulation

ABSTRACT

An evaluation of the Maryland Day Care Voucher Demonstration was conducted after approximately 6 months of voucher use in two counties, one a small rural setting and the other a much larger suburban area. Findings were derived primarily from a mail survey of the staff, provider, and client populations in the two counties. A total of 14 staff, 279 family providers, 31 center providers, and 204 clients responded. Additional information was obtained through participant observation and supplementary interviews with a small number of participants. It was found that, overall, the change from direct county/provider contracts to day care vouchers issued to clients appeared to be a less consequential event than had been anticipated by state and county day care staff. Introduction of vouchers was seen to be a positive development in both counties' day care programs. Evaluation questionnaires are appended to the document. A separate booklet provides the state regulations governing family day care registration (From Article 88A of the annotated code of Maryland). (RH)

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SIX-MONTH EVALUATION OF THE MARYLAND DAY CARE VOUCHER DEMONSTRATION

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March 1984

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Prepared Under Contract
to Department of Human Resources
Social Services Administration, State
of Maryland (Contract # SSA/DC-07/83-001;
Cost: $7225)

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SIX MONTH EVALUATION OF THE MARYLAND DAY CARE VOUCHER DEMONSTRATION

I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An evaluation of the Maryland Day Care Voucher Demonstration was conducted after approximately six months of voucher usage in two counties, one with a small rural population, (Washington County), the other much larger and suburban in nature (Anne Arundel). Evaluation findings were derived primarily from information and perceptions acquired through a mail survey of the staff, provider and client populations in the two counties. Fourteen staff, 279 family providers, 31 center providers, and 204 clients responded. Additional information was obtained through participant observation and supplementary interviews with a small number of staff, providers and clients.

Overall, the change from direct county-provider contracts for purchase-of-care (POC) to the issuance of day care vouchers to clients appeared to be less dramatic and consequential an event than had been anticipated by state and county day care staff. For most clients and providers in Anne Arundel County, the voucher appeared to represent a relatively simple administrative change in a program that has run well and has been well-accepted for years. In Washington County, the voucher appeared to be viewed as an integral part of a growing new program which was designed to help the working poor help themselves.

At this point in time, it appears that neither the adverse effects feared by some nor the full benefits envisioned by others

have materialized to the extent originally expected. Nevertheless, the following specific findings indicate that the introduction of the voucher has been a positive development in the two counties' day care programs:

- **General satisfaction with the voucher system is high.** The vast majority of clients (99%), family providers (85%), center providers (83%) and staff (100%) were somewhat or very satisfied with the voucher as a means of providing and paying for day care service. Most frequently cited advantages of the voucher include better client choice and participation, administrative convenience and simplicity, and clear definition of responsibility of all parties concerned. Paperwork and slow payment to providers were the chief disadvantages cited.

- **Clients' choice among providers has improved.** All veteran staff and a majority of veteran clients felt that the voucher system had improved clients' ability to choose among day care providers. Fourteen percent of the providers who had switched from not serving POC clients to serving voucher clients did so because of the voucher. Less than one-third of all providers refuse to take D.S.S. clients, and only 30% of them said that the voucher system was "involved" in their refusal. Only one veteran provider had actually stopped serving clients because of the vouchers.

- **The voucher system appears to have had a positive effect on client activity in the day care program.** Overall, clients were apparently more involved in general day care decision-making, more selective in choosing providers, and more attentive to quality of care under the voucher system than under POC. Furthermore, they appeared to be spending more time interacting with providers before, during, and after placement. Clients did not appear to be changing from one provider to another any more under the voucher system than under POC and there appeared to have been no adverse effects on the treatment of high priority children, particularly those of protective services clients.

- **Placement appears to be a little quicker under the voucher system.** According to client estimates in both counties, elapsed time between application for day care and placement of children was shorter -- at least two thirds of a day, or 12% shorter -- under the voucher system than it was under POC. Staff "guesstimates" were mixed: lower under the voucher in Washington County and higher in Anne Arundel.

- **There have been no significant changes in client costs.** While one-fourth of the veteran clients were paying more for day care under the voucher, fully a third were paying less. The net change for 46 clients who responded was an average decrease in costs of $3.22 per child per week. About one-fifth of the family providers and three-fifths of the center providers had raised rates but few had done so in response to the change in vouchers. The average rate increase since April 1, 1983, was $1.35 per child per day.

- **Data relating the voucher to improved quality of care are inconsistent.** Almost all client respondents were satisfied with the quality of care their children received. Almost half of the veteran clients were more satisfied with quality under the voucher system than under POC and the rest felt no change in satisfaction. There was no evidence, however, to suggest that actual quality had improved since voucher introduction. In fact, among several centers that had only started serving D.S.S. clients after voucher introduction, the quality appeared slightly lower than it was a year before among several POC centers. It is possibly still too early to try to measure the effects of the voucher change on this outcome.

- **The voucher system has not been particularly burdensome from the viewpoint of most day care providers.** In each of three different areas, only one in nine veteran providers felt the voucher system to be more burdensome than the POC system: (1) in time spent on routine administrative details related to D.S.S. clients, (2) in ability to maintain a maximum number of clients, and (3) in time required to prepare invoices for the D.S.S. In all three areas, there were respondents who felt the opposite (4%, 22%, and 9%, respectively), but the vast majority reported no difference under the voucher system, or did not know.

  Over one-fifth of all the provider respondents felt it took longer (an average of 11.2 days longer) to get paid by D.S.S. during the first few months of the voucher. Seven percent said it took less time (an average of 14.5 days shorter). Payment scheduling was clearly the most sensitive day care program issue for providers. Many providers in the program complained that monthly payment was not frequent enough for their fragile budgets and many others refused to take D.S.S. clients for this reason.

  Very few veteran providers (11%) reported that the voucher system had made it more difficult for them to keep the number of children in their care at the highest possible level.

o **Expected administrative benefits from the changeover were delayed initially.** It was expected that conversion to vouchers coupled with automation of client and provider information would yield measurable improvements in staff efficiency and fiscal accuracy. As with any administrative change of this magnitude, initial program disruption and consumption of staff time were high; therefore, the six-month evaluation yielded no dramatic overall improvement in administration. Specifically, reductions in staff paperwork and administrative detail, in invoice adjustments, or in variances between allocated and actual county day care expenditures had not occurred.

However, several adjustments did occur during the period of voucher implementation that should in time lead to some of the originally expected administrative benefits. For example, there had been an initial requirement that staff issue a new voucher whenever a change in client circumstances warranted a change in amount of subsidy. At about the time of data collection for the evaluation, this time-consuming practice was replaced by the use of a simple voucher change form instead of a whole new voucher document. The time savings from this simple adjustment is expected to be dramatic in future months.

On balance, the findings suggest that the change to a voucher system in Washington and Anne Arundel Counties has been effective in meeting key client-oriented outcomes of the day care program without serious cost increases to clients or additional burden to clients and providers. Improvements in county administrative outcomes have been slow in coming, due mainly to the time-consuming nature of automating records systems and the initial reissuing of vouchers when clients' circumstances changed. Both of these problems have been resolved and they could be avoided by other counties making the change in the future.

On the basis of these findings, the evaluation team

recommends that the voucher system be implemented statewide. The experience in Washington and Anne Arundel Counties suggests, however, that the State consider the following additional recommendations:

- **Neither the State nor the Counties should have unrealistic expectations for program benefits to be derived from changing to the voucher reimbursement system.** The voucher represents an administrative change with the opportunity for positive impact on client choice, involvement, and satisfaction, but it is limited as a means of reducing burden on providers or D.S.S. staff. Other changes which may accompany voucher implementation , such as the introduction of micro-computers, could lead eventually to reduced burden.

- **The extent and pace of Statewide implementation should be based upon careful consideration of the unique circumstances of each county day care program.** Washington and Anne Arundel Counties are only two of two dozen different jurisdictions in Maryland. It is possible that differences among them would affect the success of changing to voucher use. Size of program, D.S.S. staff availability and willingness to change, and client ability to pay additional fees and to adjust to new responsibilities are a few that could have significant consequences.

  Anne Arundel and Washington Counties received critical assitance in converting to the voucher and automated information systems -- assistance in the form of computer equipment, training, and temporary additional personnel. The extent to which such assistance could be provided to other counties is another important consideration. All these factors should be carefully weighed before decisions about statewide implementation are made.

- **Statewide implementation should allow more gradual conversion of caseloads to the voucher system, especially in local jurisdictions with large day care programs.** Experience in the two demonstration counties suggests that it is unrealistic to expect smooth conversion to vouchers in a short time. Conversion is very labor-intensive, involving adjustment of every day care case record and the issuance of a voucher for each client in the caseload. A phased-in approach would also allow the spacing of time-consuming redeterminations six months after initial voucher issuance. For example, if caseload conversion were spread over a period of several months, redetermination for those

cases would also be spread out on a proportionate basis.

It is likely that most counties, especially the larger ones, would choose to automate their day care information systems in conjunction with conversion to vouchers. Ideally, computerization should precede voucher introduction (so as to avoid unnecessary stress on program administration), but where that does not happen, the need for a gradual changeover will be even more evident.

- **Conversion to the voucher system should include intensive outreach to all providers in the day care system.** Expanded choice for clients depends in large part on the availability of providers willing to participate in the day care program. The evaluation revealed that several providers were unaware of the change to vouchers or unwilling to accept D.S.S. children on the basis of experience or perceptions of the POC system. It is believed that the more providers understand the voucher system and its advantages to clients and providers alike, the more likely they will be to participate in the program. Furthermore, adequate training in voucher procedures, including frequent orientation for new providers, should increase participation and improve day-to-day administration for all parties concerned.

- **Suggestions from demonstration county staff should be considered for incorporation into future implementation.** Staff respondents made several suggestions for improving the process of converting to and administering day care vouchers. For example, it was suggested that the "fraud statement" be incorporated into the voucher itself and that the voucher replace Form 248 as the source of statistical reports. These and other ideas should be explored when preparing to extend the voucher to other counties in the State.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE VOUCHER DEMONSTRATION

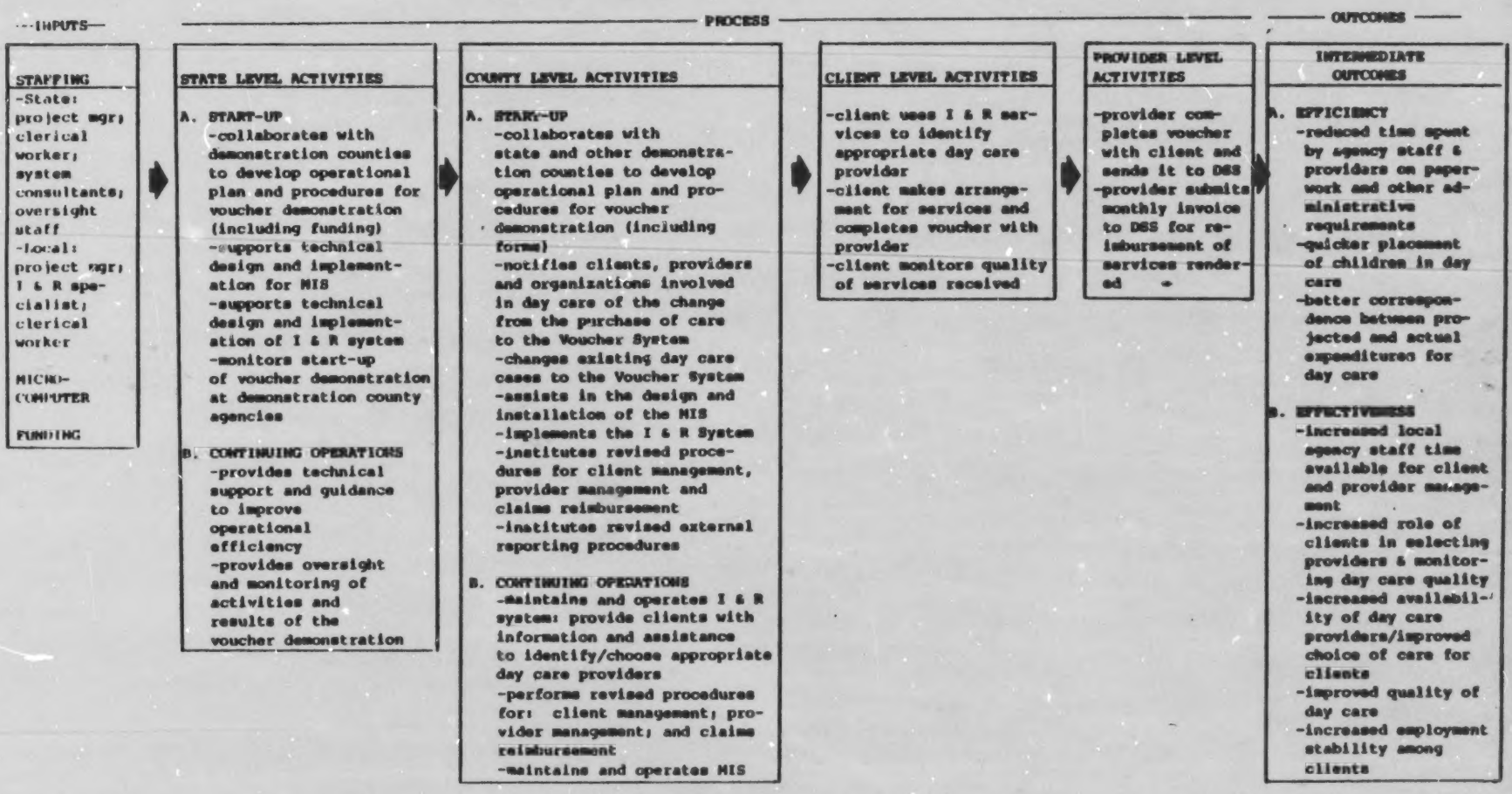
This short chapter provides a summary description of the voucher demonstration in the form of a logic model, presented in Exhibit 1. (Logic models are an established convention for describing a government initiative for the purpose of planning evaluation. See R. Schmidt, J. Scanlon, and J. Bell, Evaluability Assessment: Making Public Programs Work Better, Project Share Monograph Series Number 14, November 1979.)

The model is based on information found in key project documents (e.g. the grant proposal) and obtained in discussions with State and voucher county day care personnel. In shorthand form, the logic model outlines the basic voucher demonstration design: the inputs such as staff and other resources needed for implementation, the major activities required at each of four levels -- State, county, provider and client -- and the specific improvements in the day care program expected to result from the change to the voucher system.

The questions addressed in the evaluation were derived, for the most part, from the logic model in Exhibit 1. While attention was heavily focused on expected outcomes of the voucher demonstration, the evaluation did produce some interesting findings about the process as well. It is expected that the evaluation information reported in this chapter will be useful not only to policy makers facing a voucher/no voucher decision, but also to day care staff facing implementation of a voucher approach in their own program.

Exhibit 1

Draft Logic Model of the Day Care Voucher Demonstration



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III. EVALUATION APPROACH

For reasons of cost and feasibility, a qualitative evaluation design was employed which relied primarily on the post-implementation observations and opinions of those who participated. As the voucher system was implemented on April 1, 1983, and evaluation was conducted in September - December 1983, the voucher period had been approximately six to nine months long when data were collected. No specific evaluation data was collected during the pre-voucher period. The post-voucher perceptions and opinions of county day care staff, family and center providers, and clients were collected through mail surveys between the months of September and December. Supplementary face-to-face interviews were conducted with several staff in each county and in one of the counties a few telephone interviews with clients and providers and a few case file reviews were conducted, as resources permitted. Each of the surveys included a combination of closed and open - ended questions, asking respondents to describe current and pre-voucher program conditions and to make judgments about changes since (or as a result of) introduction of the voucher system.

Copies of questionnaires and accompanying letters for each respondent group are provided in Appendix 1. To reduce the burden on providers and clients, each group was divided into three roughly equal sub-groups and administered shortened versions of their particular questionnaire. While some questions were asked of all sub-groups, others of lesser importance were divided among the three versions of the questionnaire. Exhibits

in Appendix 1 indicate which questions from the master questionnaires were asked of specific sub-groups.

Questionnaires were sent to and received by 15 day care staff, 602 family providers, 69 center providers, and 469 clients in the two demonstration counties.[1] (See Exhibit 2 for county-specific details). Completed or partially completed surveys were returned by 14 staff (93%), 279 family providers (46%), 31 center providers (45%) and 204 clients (44%). It is believed that a follow-up letter to initial non-respondents increased the return rate considerably, by as much as 5 - 10 percent.

Before reviewing the results of the evaluation, a few points need to be made about the data collection:

(1) Given the time required to fully implement and routinize the use of vouchers, it is possible that evaluation data collected at a later time would yield somewhat different results. Several staff made this point in their interviews. If so, the most likely consequence is that, as more and more kinks were wrung from the system, administration and service would have improved, yielding more positive findings than presented here. This is particularly likely in the case of day care worker perceptions of administrative impacts.

(2) This evaluation relied heavily on people's estimates and perceptions of change in conditions from the POC past to the

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[1] Undelivered surveys due to incorrect addresses, no forwarding address, etc., are not counted here.

Exhibit 2: SURVEY RESPONDENTS (NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE), BY COUNTY

Respondent Group		Washington County	Anne Arundel County	Unidentified 1/	All
County Day Care Staff	Received Q'aires	7	8	-	15
	Returned Q'aires	7	7	-	14
	Percent Returned	100%	88%		93%
Family Providers	Received Q'aires	220	382	-	620
	Returned Q'aires	125 2/	123	40	288
	Percent Returned	57%	32%		46%
Center Provider	Received Q'aires	14	55	-	69
	Returned Q'aires	9	18	4	31
	Percent Returned	64%	33%		45%
Clients	Received Q'aires	118	351	-	469
	Returned Q'aires	46	134	25	205
	Percent Returned	39%	38%		44%

1/ These respondents chose not to return a coded ID number, which was used primarily to identify individuals not requiring a follow-up letter.

2/ Six (6) of these were completed by telephone interview.

voucher present. It was not possible to test confounding variables systematically and to test the effects of the voucher alone on variables of interest. The voucher change was accompanied by a variety of other changes, each of which may have had some effects on such outcomes as efficiency, client costs, satisfaction, and so on. Washington County's dramatic expansion of the program, changes in the economy, personnel changes, etc. may have influenced certain outcomes. Care should be taken in interpreting all findings. They should be treated as suggestive, rather than definitive.

(3) The survey return figures for providers and clients represent less than half the providers and clients in the two demonstration counties. This is further reason for caution in interpreting the findings. At this point, however, there is no known reason to suspect any particular biases among those who did or did not respond. Several non-respondents were contacted and interviewed by telephone, and the responses of these individuals did not appear any different on the whole from those received by mail.

(4) As part of the effort to gauge providers' knowledge of the voucher demonstration, the provider questionnaire was sent to <u>all</u> known providers in Washington and Anne Arundel Counties. Many who responded to the survey had never actually had any experience with the voucher. (For example, only about one-fourth of the family provider respondents and about one-third of the center provider respondents were caring for voucher children at the time they completed the survey). Of those, even fewer had also been caring for county-assisted children before the voucher

was introduced and were thus qualified to compare the voucher with the previous purchase-of-care (POC) system.

(5) On some open-ended questions, it was clear that many provider and client respondents could not separate their perceptions of the voucher system from those of the day care program as a whole. While this is understandable for the relative newcomers who knew no other approach, it also suggests that for many providers and clients the change to the voucher system represented a rather minor change in the whole day care scheme of things, with less dramatic (or perhaps less obvious) consequences than had been anticipated by project designers.

IV. EVALUATION RESULTS

The results of the evaluation are presented below under several headings, including discussions of voucher implementation, service delivery issues, effects on clients, providers, and staff, and general satisfaction indicators. In each section, the survey results are foremost, but are supplemented with information collected in discussions with staff in each of the two demonstration counties.

Adequate Support is Crucial to Smooth Implementation

From the veiwpoint of day care providers and clients, the change from POC to vouchers presented few problems and was generally accepted as a positive move. A very few providers identified specific problems with implementation, such as late paperwork from the D.S.S. office, initial difficulty in fitting the voucher into their rate structures, a need for more thorough explanation of procedures, and getting used to the new invoice procedures. The adjustment period appears to have been brief and relatively painless for the vast majority, however. As one respondent put it, "I thought it would be a nuisance at first, but after a month of completing the necessary paper, I find it is O.K."

Many providers , especially in Anne Arundel County, were apparently unaware of the "voucher system" and several specifically requested information about it in their survey

comments. It is possible that if more providers were made aware of the voucher approach and its advantages over the old POC system, more would join the pool of providers available to D.S.S. day care clients.

When county staff were asked about problems during implementation of the voucher system, a few noted that the computer equipment was not, but should have been, on site at the start of the demonstration project. Furthermore, staff should have been trained in computer use early, even before start of the voucher approach.

The delay in computerizing voucher records slowed implementation. However with full implementation, the computer is becoming a useful tool for more efficient and accurate program operations, particularly for processing claims reimbursement invoices and referring clients to providers. Although it is certainly possible to initiate the voucher and automation at the same time, it might be argued that staging the voucher introduction and the computerization would have produced less stress and strain in the long run. If computerization is to be an effective part of a voucher implementation package, it is important that the day care staff receive assistance in computer applications. Such assistance would include setting up file, screen and report formats, training staff, ensuring quality control of initial data entry, analyzing forms and forms flow, and planning continuing development of the system.

Individual members offered a few other pieces of advice for day care programs planning to switch to a voucher approach:

--Stagger the voucher introduction in order to stave off excessive workloads during each six-month reconsideration.

--Train providers thoroughly in voucher administration procedures. Orient new providers entering the program on a monthly basis.

--Put a fraud statement on the voucher itself and use the voucher instead of a Form 248 for the statistical report.

No Change in Staff Time on Paperwork/Administrative Tasks vs. Client Assistance

One of the expected benefits of the change to a voucher system was a reduction of staff time required for paperwork and administrative detail and a complementary increase of time available for client contact activity. Comparable pre-voucher/post-voucher data for nine of the 14 day care staff respondents revealed that there was no apparent change in the relative time devoted to administration and client assistance. Before the voucher, staff were spending 69.0% of their time on administrative work (and the remainder on client contact tasks); after the voucher was introduced, it was 68.5%. There was a difference between the two counties, however. In Washington County, the overall pre/post change for five staff was from 83.7% to 73.9%, indicating <u>less</u> time spent on administrative detail under the voucher system, but in Anne Arundel County four staff indicated a small overall <u>increase</u> from 59.1% to 63.5%. In subsequent discussion, one Anne Arundel County staff member

attributed the lack of time savings to the continued need to track client cases in order to keep the voucher up to date. In September, 1983, for example, many children moved from full-time to part-time care, because of returns to school, and a great deal of paperwork was required.

Several Anne Arundel County staff expressed annoyance with the requirement to write a new voucher whenever changes occurred in a client's circumstances. This may account for Anne Arundel County's perception of increased paperwork. Interviewees in Washington County also suggested that the staff survey had come at a bad time, since this requirement was burdening their staff as well. The problem has since been solved by requiring the completion of a simple change form instead of a whole new voucher. It is possible that responses would be different if the survey were readministered at this later date.

Staff were specifically asked whether, first, the voucher system itself and second, the computerized data system, had served to reduce or increase the amount of time spent on program administration. In both cases, the data were rather mixed, but the general conclusion is that neither system was perceived to have effect one way or the other on caseworker time devoted to administrative activities.

On the positive side, one intake worker felt that the computerized information system was saving time for her -- she no longer had to "run from one worker to another" for client and provider information. The fiscal administrator in one county acknowledged that the computerized system was providing better and more timely information on program costs, now that the bugs

had been ironed out. As a result, administrative time was being saved. In Washington County, staff are now using the computer to generate the monthly service report (302D) for the State. Finally, one supervisor suggested that once the computer was fully operational in processing invoices (that month) the time savings would be dramatic. Apparently the survey was a bit too early to catch the effects of full computerization of both counties' record systems.

Fiscal Management Not Significantly Affected, But Improvements Reported in Monthly Invoice Processing

When the voucher demonstration was being proposed, it was suggested that the change might lead to two specific improvements in the county offices' fiscal management of the day care program: a reduction in the size of monthly variances between allocated and actual program expenditures, and a reduction in the number of required invoice adjustments each month. From the limited information available, there is little reason to believe that the voucher has had a particularly positive impact on fiscal management (i.e. spending control). However, both demonstration counties indicated that, once the management information system had become fully operational, there was considerable time savings in monthly invoice processing and payment calculations were more accurate.

In Anne Arundel County, the average monthly difference between actual and allocated total day care expenditure for August-December 1982 (pre-voucher) was 13.7% ("difference"

divided by "allocated amount") ; for the same months after voucher introduction, the average was 12.6%. A similar pre/post-voucher comparison for Washington County was not possible.

In both counties, staff reported that there had not been many invoice adjustments even before the voucher system was introduced. Room for improvement in this area, then, was limited from the start. While no numbers were available, staff did suggest that the voucher system might be decreasing invoice adjustments. Under the previous POC system, it was difficult for county staff to estimate what fees would be paid by clients, and invoice adjustments depended not only on D.S.S. payments but on client payments as well. Under the voucher system, the relationship between client payments and invoice adjustments was eliminated, thus reducing the opportunity for things to go wrong. Furthermore, the introduction of computerized invoice calculations -- a change that facilitated the voucher move but was not an essential component -- has reduced some of the human error that could lead to the need for invoice adjustments.

It is apparent from the foregoing that if the voucher has improved fiscal management at the county level, the signs are only now beginning to show. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that the voucher system has had any adverse effects.

Decreased Elapsed Time Between Application and Placement

Another program expectation was that the voucher system would help reduce the amount of time it takes to place a child in

day care once application for assistance has been made by the client. The argument was made that the client could arrange placement more quickly than could a D.S.S. staff person, who had other cases and responsibilities, and that the increased number of available providers would also make speedy placement more likely.

Staff perceptions were mixed on this question. When asked to estimate the number of calendar days between application and placement for the periods before and after voucher introduction, the average estimates (from a total of five staff members) were 14.4 days before voucher and 4.4 days after voucher implementation. This figure masks a considerable difference between the two counties, however: Washington County's three respondents reported an average of 22.7 days from application to placement before vouchers (the range was from 2 to 33) and 3.3 days after (range: 2 to 5) , while Anne Arundel County's two respondents reported an average of 2.0 days before and 6.0 days after. Washington County reported a considerable improvement in application-voucher time, but Anne Arundel County reported a modest worsening of the situation.

When asked about the direct effects of the voucher system and the computerized data system on elapsed time, each county sub-group complemented their earlier responses: Washington County staff felt that the voucher and the computer each had served to reduce elapsed time, while Anne Arundel County felt the opposite. When the two counties' data were combined, the opposite effects for each were canceled out.

Clients themselves were asked how long it had taken them to

place their child(ren) once they had applied for day care assistance. When clients were divided into those who had placed their children before the voucher was introduced and those after, the results indicated a change over time toward less application-placement time. This was true overall and for both counties separately. Two analyses of the data were performed, as indicated in Exhibit 3.

When all client responses were tabulated, it was found that post-voucher placement time averaged 7.8 days shorter than pre-voucher placement time for the entire sample, 1.1 days shorter for Washington County and 9.7 days shorter for Anne Arundel. Some of the big difference in Anne Arundel County is attributable to a small number of respondents who reported very lengthy placement times (up to 8 months for the pre-voucher period and 50 days for the voucher period). According to day care staff, these lengthy delays tend more often to reflect advanced planning on the part of clients than actual difficulty in placing children. To adjust for this phenomenon, a second analysis of the data was performed in which all estimated placement times above 30 days were dropped. The results, in Part 2 of Exhibit 3, still indicate a positive change toward less post-voucher placement time, overall and for each county. If the client estimates of application-placement time can be accepted with more confidence than the general surmisals of a few D.S.S. staff, the conclusion is that placement time is generally shorter under the voucher system than it was under POC.

Exhibit 3: AVERAGE PRE-VOUCHER AND POST VOUCHER APPLICATION TO PLACEMENT TIME, IN DAYS (CLIENT ESTIMATES).

	Wash. County	Anne Arundel County	Unidentified Respondents	All Respondents
Part 1: All Data				
Before Voucher	6.33	17.44	4.09	14.35
After Voucher	5.22	7.73	5.00	6.47
Percentage Decrease (Increase)	18%	56%	(22%)	55%
Part 2: Limited Data 1/				
Before Voucher	6.33	5.88	4.09	5.59
After Voucher	5.22	4.69	5.00	4.93
Percentage Decrease (Increase)	18%	20%	(22%)	12%

1/ Individual estimates over 30 days excluded. See text for explanation.

Voucher's Impact on Provider Burden is Low, But Mixed

The voucher system was expected to decrease the burden on county day care staff, but it was uncertain as to what effect it might have on providers, who had to adapt to a new system of recording hours and billing for service. The results from several provider survey questions revealed that for each item at least two-thirds or more of the repondents either did not know if their burden had been changed or felt that the voucher had not made any difference. Among the others the reaction was mixed, the voucher having made life easier for some but harder for others.

Only three out of 27 veteran center and family providers (11%) felt that they were spending more time on routine administrative details related to their D.S.S. clients (e.g. preparing and submitting invoices) under the voucher system than previously. One (4%) felt she was spending less time, 17 (63%) neither more nor less time and six (22%) did not know.

There had been some speculation that elimination of POC contracts and broadening the provider pool for D.S.S. clients might make it more difficult for ex-POC providers to retain their clientele. According to survey respondents, a few cases lost clients; and, for some reason, the opposite was reported by several providers. Out of 36 veteran family and center providers, four (11%) reported that the voucher system had made it somewhat or more difficult for them to keep their number of children in care at the highest possible level, but eight (22%) reported just the opposite (33% reported no change and 33% did not know).

Two potential troublespots are the time required to prepare invoices and the amount of time providers have to wait to be paid. Exhibits 4 and 5 present data on these two problem areas. Overall, 11% of all veteran providers who responded to the question felt that they were spending more time preparing invoices for their local D.S.S. under the voucher system. The additional time required ranged from one-quarter to one and one-quarter hours per week, with the average being about 38 minutes per week. On the other hand, as many as 9% said that they were spending less time; and the few who gave an estimate said that they were spending one-half to two and one-half hours less.[2]

The most serious problem lay in the time between submission of invoices to the D.S.S. and payment. As many as 22% of the veteran providers reported that it took longer to get paid under the voucher system than previously -- an average of 11.2 days. On the other hand, only 7% felt that payment was quicker through the voucher than through POC arrangements -- an average of 14.5 days quicker, according to two respondents.

Exhibit 5 indicates that the bulk of the problem with payment delays was occurring in Anne Arundel County. Discussions with the staff there confirmed that payment delays had been a problem in the first several months of voucher operation, since problems with switching to the computerized records system were requiring a considerable amount of manual processing. As of

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[2] Since the respondent numbers here were very small, the reader is cautioned to be careful in interpreting these results. Also, it cannot be determined whether these reported changes are based on comparable pre- and post-voucher caseloads for the providers involved.

Exhibit 4: VOUCHER VS. PRE-VOUCHER TIME SPENT ON PREPARING INVOICES

Percentage of Providers Reporting:	FAMILY PROVIDERS				CENTER PROVIDERS				All PROVIDERS
	Wash. County (N=25)	A.A. County (N=33)	Unidentified (N=15)	All (N=73)	Wash. County (N=5)	A.A. County (N=8)	Unid. (N=2)	All (N=15)	(N=88)
More Time Under Voucher	8%	3%	20%	8%	20%	38%	0%	27%	11%
Average Number Of Additional Hours Per Week	.38 (2) 1/	1.00 (1)	.29 (2)	.47 (5)	.25 (1)	1.35 (2)		.92 (3)	.83 (8)
Less Time Under Voucher	12%	3%	0%	4%	20%	38%	0%	27%	9%
Average Number of Fewer Hours Per Week	--2/	50 (1)		.50 (1)	--2/	2.50 (2)		2.50 (1)	1.61 (3)
Neither More Nor Less Time	52%	64%	53%	58%	60%	25%	100%	47%	59%
Do not Know	28%	30%	27%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	24%

1/ Number of Providers who gave an estimate.

2/ Question was not answered.

Exhibit 5: VOUCHER VS. PRE-VOUCHER INVOICE-TO-PAYMENT TIME

Percentage of Providers Reporting:	FAMILY PROVIDERS				CENTER PROVIDERS				ALL PROVIDERS
	Washington County (N=25)	Anne Arundel County (N=34)	Unid. (N=13)	All (N=72)	Washington County (N=5)	Anne Arundel County (N=8)	Unid. (N=2)	All (N=15)	(N=87)
More Time Under Voucher	4%	3%	23%	22%	0%	38%	0%	20%	22%
Average Number of Additional Days	15.0 (1) 1/	11.4 (12)	10.0 (3)	11.4 (16)		10.0 (2)		10.0 (2)	11.2 (18)
Less Time Under Voucher	12%	0%	0%	4%	20%	25%	0%	20%	7%
Average Number of Fewer Days 2/		--	--			14.5 (2)	--	14.5 (2)	14.5 (2)
Neither More Nor Less Time	48%	38%	46%	43%	60%	38%	50%	47%	44%
Do not Know	36%	28%	31%	31%	20%	0%	50%	13%	28%

1/ Number of Providers who gave an estimate.

2/ Blanks indicate that the question was not answered.

January, 1984, the problems appeared to have been resolved and staff suggested that providers would be very surprised by that month's speedy payment processing. Nevertheless, payment was a concern of providers, a large number of whom found D.S.S. payment on a post-service basis very inconvenient in the first place.

Priority Clients Not Adversely Affected by Voucher

When the Voucher system was developed, several county staff were concerned that certain high priority clients would be adversely affected since responsibility for placement would now rest with the clients themselves. Of particular interest were children involved in protective services cases.

When asked if the voucher system had had any effect on the way priority clients were being served, nine county staff answered as follows: one said priority clients are "much better" served now (because speed of placement has contributed to better service all around), one said "somewhat better," three reported no change, one reported "somewhat more poorly" (because they often cannot afford the additional fees) and three said they "did not know."

In the case of protective services clients, the staff at Anne Arundel County reported that there has been no difference in service with the voucher system: some protective services workers let clients find their own providers, other workers do it for the clients, and still others ask the day care staff to do it. In any case, there are no new delays in service caused by the voucher. An inspection of records in Washington County did

not reveal any noteworthy differences among various priority groups with respect to application-placement times.

No Substantial Increases in Day Care Costs for Clients

Probably the greatest concern among both proponents and skeptics of the voucher system was that day care expenses for clients might rise dramatically upon changeover from the POC system. It was feared not so much that providers might take undue advantage of the opportunity to raise rates as that some clients would simply not be able to afford the difference between State contributions and normal provider charges, which had been kept artificially low under the POC system.

A review of survey results shows that very few providers raised rates in response to the voucher change. As for the clients, several reported higher costs since voucher implementation, but a larger number reported that their costs had decreased. It is not clear what role the voucher had played in these changes. At any rate, very few clients complained that the voucher had served to raise their day care costs.

Among family providers willing to accept (or thoseactually caring for) D.S.S.children, a small number -- fewer than one in five -- had raised rates between April 1, 1983 and the time of the survey. (See Exhibit 6 for detailed figures.) Of those who did raise rates, only 29% (or 5% of the total number of providers) reported that the voucher had been involved in their decision. The average increase was $1.34 per child per day.

A much greater percentage of center providers had raised rates (60%) with an average increase of $1.40 per child per day.

Exhibit 6: PROVIDER RATE INCREASES SINCE VOUCHER IMPLEMENTATION

	FAMILY PROVIDERS				CENTER PROVIDERS				ALL PROVIDERS
	Wash. County	Anne Arundel County	Unid.	All	Wash. County	Anne Arundel County	Unid.	All	
Providers Who Had Raised Rates Since 4/1/83 1/	18% (11/60)	18% (10/56)	15% (3/20)	18% (24/136)	63% (5/8)	69% (9/13)	25% (1/4)	60% (15/25)	24% (39/161)
Percentage Who Cited Voucher as Involved in Decision to Raise Rates	27% (3/11)	20% (2/10)	67% (2/3)	29% (7/24)	0% (0/5)	0% (0/9)	0% (0/1)	0% (0/15)	18% (7/39)
Average Rate Increase per Child Per Day	$1.09 (n=7)	$1.49 (n=10)	$1.50 (n=2)	$1.34 (n=19)	$.46 (n=5)	$2.17 (n=8)	$1.00 (n=1)	$1.48 (n=14)	$1.40 (n=33)

1/ Sample included only providers who either were willing to accept DSS clients and/or were currently caring for DSS client childeren.

None of them said it was related to the implementation of the voucher, however. While the two counties were very similar in terms of percentage of providers who had increased rates, Washington County providers' increases were substantially smaller than those of Anne Arundel County providers. Washington County day care staff explained that, as a general rule, their providers charged lower than the going rate and many had resisted increases for several years. The estimated average rate was about $40.00 per week per child, but some providers were still charging as low as $25.00 per week.

According to survey results, D.S.S. day care clients who were paying out of pocket for day care services in late 1983 were paying an average of $12.72 per week. Per child, the figure was $9.40 per week. The difference between the two counties was considerable: in Washington County the average per client was $8.39 and per child $6.35, while in Anne Arundel County, clients were paying $14.51, or $10.38 per child.[3]

Clients who were paying providers an additional fee above what the D.S.S. was paying were asked why. Of the 111 who responded, 50% (55) said it was because their income was such that the D.S.S. would only cover part of their day care expenses. Eighteen percent (20) reported that they had chosen to place their children with a better quality provider who charged more for services than had previous providers. It might be inferred

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[3] These figures are based on responses from 122 clients: 25 in Washington County, 81 in Anne Arundel County, and 16 unidentified. Several others actually reported paying nothing, but these were not included in the analysis. It is likely that many others paying nothing simply did not answer the question.

here that some of this movement to different providers was facilited by the change to a voucher sysytem. Finally, 21% (23) of the paying clients said that the provider they had been using since pre-voucher days had recently raised rates, and 12% cited various other reasons.[4]

Clients who had been receiving day care assistance before the voucher system were asked if they were now paying more or less out-of-pocket than they had been during pre-voucher days. Exhibit 7 presents the responses to this question: One-fourth of the respondents reported that they were paying more for services -- an average of $7.19 more per week -- under the voucher system. Oddly enough, however, a larger number -- about one-third -- reported paying less than previously, about an average of $11.23 per client per week less. The net change for 46 clients who responded was an average decrease of $3.22 per child per week. Presumably, the increase for some clients can be explained by changes in their income, and some of the decrease for others can be explained by a recent state rate increase.[5] Without additional clarifying information, however, it is not clear what part the voucher has played in these increases and decreases. It should be noted here that very few of the clients paying more mentioned serious adverse consequences to their budget as a result of the increases.

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[4] The 21% of clients reporting increased rates corroborates approximately, the 24% figure for providers who raised rates.

[5] In August, 1983, the State started paying an additional $.03/hr. for Center care, $.07/hr. for family care, and $.08/hr. for care of handicapped children.

Exhibit 7: PRE- AND POST-VOUCHER CHANGES IN CLIENT EXPENSES FOR DAY CARE SERVICE

	Washington County	Anne Arundel County	Unidentified	All
Clients Paying More During Voucher Period	22%	30%	0%	25%
Average Amount More Per Week	$7.38 (n=2)	$7.17 (n=18)	-	$7.19 (n=20)
Clients Paying Less	56%	32%	27%	34%
Average Amount Less Per Week	$19.10 (n=5)	$9.39 (n=18)	$6.00 (n=3)	$11.23 (n=26)
Clients Paying Neither More Nor Less	22%	32%	36%	31%
Do Not Know	0%	7%	36%	10%

Expanded Day Care Choices for Clients

One of the most positive findings regarding the voucher system is that it has opened up a much wider choice of providers for most clients. When eight veteran staff were asked wether the voucher system had improved clients' choices among providers, the overall average rating was 4.75 on a scale of 5 to 1(Washington County: 5.0, n=4; Anne Arundel County: 4.5, n=4). The following sampling of comments reflects the positive ratings:

> The client is no longer limited to only homes that contract for purchase-of-care. They can approach any registered home. In the old system, we could not place many children because so few homes would contract with us...Most of our POC homes before were in public housing projects.

> Clients are now able to be more selective...and, therefore, often choose one that generally did not accept POC.

> Providers are now accepting vouchers that never would have considered it on the old system. We paid a maximum rate of $29.00 per week and our providers are now receiving $50-60 per week.

> The number of Centers (who accept clients) has risen from 16 pre-voucher to 45 after...and it's directly related to the fact that they don't have to sign a contract and we removed the fee ceiling.

While increased choice was cited by Washington County staff, there was a problem in that county of insufficient supply to meet the new demand. The day care program expanded dramatically during the voucher period, from 16 clients before April 1, 1983 to well over 100 in December, 1983. During this time, however, no new center(s) was established and only a few new family providers became available.

Among providers who were available, it appears that the large majority, at least two-thirds, were willing to accept D.S.S. clients with vouchers. Exhibit 8 presents the figures for both family and center providers in both counties. Several respondents who expressed unwillingness to accept voucher children "at this time" cited current inability to take more children as their reason, and a few said they were getting out of day care altogether. If the first set are considered amenable to D.S.S. clients and the second set are dropped from analysis, the overall willingness figure jumps to 76% of all providers surveyed.

Thirty percent of the family providers who were unwilling to take D.S.S. children, (24 out of 81 responding) cited the voucher system as part of their reason. Caution is suggested in interpretation here, since it is likely that at least some providers failed to distinguish the voucher system per se from the whole D.S.S. day care system. Among the specific reasons cited for unwillingness to accept D.S.S. clients, providers noted

Exhibit 8: **PROVIDERS WILLING TO ACCEPT DSS CHILDREN AT THE TIME OF THE SURVEY (PERCENTAGES)**

	Washington County	Anne Arundel County	Unidentified	All
Family Providers	72% 1/ (n=117)	54% (n=123)	59% (n=39)	62% (n=279)
Center Providers	100% (n=9)	94% 2/ (n=16)	100% (n=4)	97% (n=29)
All Providers	74% (n=126)	60% (n=136)	63% (n=43)	66% 3/ (n=308)

1/ Several family providers who said they were unwillingly at the time to accept DSS. children indicated in a follow-up question that it was because they currently had no vacancies or they were no longer in day care. If the former are interpreted to be positively disposed to DSS. clients, but only temporarily unable to accept them, and the latter are dropped from the analysis, the percentages across this row change to 83%, 64%, 74%, and 73%.

2/ The one center that said "no" said that it was full at the time. As in footnote 1, an adjusted figure for this entry would be 100%; and the figure for all centers would also be 100%.

3/ Taking notes 1 and 2 into consideration, the percentage for all providers would be 76%.

the following in order of frequency: inability to be paid weekly or bi-weekly and payment delays, too much paperwork and bureaucratic red tape, low rates, preference for referrals through family and friends, undesirable/problem clientele from D.S.S., and preferences for limited months and hours. It should be noted that most of these reasons have nothing to do with the use of vouchers per se.

According to most providers who had not been accepting D.S.S. clients before April 1, 1983, but who were now, the voucher did not affect their decision to accept D.S.S. clients. Only 9 out of 84 such family providers (11%) and 5 out of 13 centers (38%) said that the voucher system helped to change their minds. On a more positive note, only one provider said that the voucher system caused her to stop accepting D.S.S. clients. No reason was given for this reaction.

Veteran clients were asked whether the Voucher system had improved their choice among day care providers. Excluding those who reported they did not know (10 out of 36 responding), 58% (15 out of 26) felt that they now had a somewhat or much better choice than before the voucher change. Fifteen percent (4) felt their choice was now somewhat or much worse and 27% (7) felt there had been no change. Contented clients cited such advantages of better choice as not having to go out of their way to get a qualified sitter and savings in transportation costs. One dissatisfied client reported that she had a hard time finding a family provider who would accept a voucher, mainly because of the paperwork required.

Increased Client Involvement in Day Care

For obvious reasons, it was expected that the use of vouchers would lead to certain changes in how clients behaved with respect to their day care responsibilities --that they would be more involved in day care decision making for their children, more selective in choosing a day care provider, and more attentive to the quality of care their children receive. Exhibit 9 presents findings on all three issues, including data for each respondent group. Overall, the voucher system had a slightly positive effect on all three client behaviors. Among all respondent groups, the only negative finding was the average perception among Washington County providers that client involvement in day care decisions decreased slightly as a result of the voucher system.

The strongest positive finding was the day care staff members' perception that clients became more involved in day care decision-making. In responses to another question, staff members reported that the day care choices made by clients were more appropriate than had been made by D.S.S. staff during pre-voucher days (4.2 on a scale of 5 to 1, n=5). Several suggested that the day care decisions are now more appropriate simply because the choices among resources are so much better: "Before, we had so few resources, if any, that the client was forced to take whatever we had to offer. Sometimes it was 20 miles away!"

One issue with respect to client involvement was raised by a day care administrator:

Exhibit 9: SUMMARY OF REPORTED VOUCHER SYSTEM EFFECTS ON CLIENT INVOLVEMENT IN DAY CARE 1/

Client Characteristic	Respondent Group	Wash. County	A.A. County	Unid.	All
Involvement in Making Day Care Decisions	Staff	4.5 (n=4)	4.6 (n=5)		4.6 (n=9)
	Providers 2/	2.8 (n=5)	3.2 (n=10)	3.3 (n=4)	3.1 (n=19)
	Clients 3/	4.0 (n=5)	3.6 (n=25)	3.3 (n=4)	3.6 (n=34)
Selectiveness In Choosing A Day Care Program	Providers	3.7 (n=6)	3.6 (n=5)	3.0 (n=2)	3.8 (n=13)
Attention Paid To The Quality Of Care Given Their Childeren	Staff	3.8 (n=4)	3.7 (n=3)		3.7 (n=7)
	Providers	3.0 (n=6)	3.4 (n=13)	3.0 (n=4)	3.2 (n=23)
	Clients	3.5 (n=2)	3.4 (n=17)	4.3 (n=3)	3.5 (n=22)

1/ Responses for each item were ordered on a 5 point scale, where 5=much more, 4=somewhat more, 3=no change, 2=someswhat less, 1=much less. Average responses (and number of respondents) are presented here.

2/ Includes family and center providers, but only those who were involved with D.S.S. clients before and after voucher introduction (April 1, 1983).

3/ Includes only clients who were involved in the Day Care Program both before and after voucher introduction.

> I have to believe that the parent knows more about the needs of his/her child than anyone else and is the best person to make such a decision, assuming that the agency workers are available to answer any questions and provide pertinent information which the parent can use to make such decisions.(emphasis added)

Presumably, clients who were now responsible for finding, negotiating with, and choosing their day care providers would still need help from their local D.S.S. day care staff. In their survey, clients were asked if they had received personal help from D.S.S. staff in developing a day care plan when they first started receiving services. Among those who had started in the day care program before April 1, 1983 (32 clients), two-thirds said that they had received help and all of them felt it had been very helpful in developing a plan and finding day care. In contrast, only one-half of post-voucher clients (36 total) reported having received help; all of them, however, found the assistance very or somewhat helpful.

Written materials were a slightly different story. Only one-third of the veteran clients (12 of 33) reported having received written materials. These materials were judged very helpful by 75%, somewhat helpful by 17% and not very helpful by 8%. Over one-half of the post-voucher clients (18 out of 34) received written material when establishing day care service. Sixty-three percent found them very helpful, 32% somewhat helpful and 5% not very helpful.

As a group, day care providers felt that clients had become more selective in choosing a provider as a result of the voucher system. This general perception was corroborated by the clients themselves when they were asked how many providers they had

visited when selecting one for their child(ren). While the clients who first started in day care before April 1, 1983 reported an average of 1.7 providers visited, those who were placed after April 1, 1983 reported visits to 2.1 providers. The reason for selecting a particular provider did not change after voucher implementation, however. Exhibit 10 shows that location and cost were the most common reasons given by veteran clients -- those who had started day care before April 1, 1983-- and by new clients. One interesting finding is the relatively higher number of post-voucher (new) clients who identified quality of care as a major reason for their provider choice.

Another possible indicator of increased client involvement under the voucher system is providers' estimates of the amount of time they spend with potential clients before placement, at placement, and thereafter. Providers were asked about all three. Overall, from the providers' point of view, there is a modest amount of evidence that voucher clients were interacting more with providers and, it might be then said, were more involved than their POC counterparts were in their children's day care services.

Twenty-nine family and center providers were asked if, since voucher implementation, they were spending more or less time with D.S.S. clients before placement-- answering questions, showing their home or center, supplying references, setting up payment arrangements, etc. Only one (3%) felt she was spending more time on pre-placement activities and two (7%) felt they were spending <u>less</u> time. Nineteen (66%) said neither more nor less

Exhibit 10: CLIENT'S REASONS FOR CHOOSING THEIR PARTICULAR PROVIDERS, BEFORE AND AFTER VOUCHER IMPLEMENTATION 1/

	Before Voucher (before 4/1/83)				After Voucher (after 4/1/83)			
	Wash. County	A.A. County	Unid.	All	Wash. County	A.A. County	Unid.	All
Convenient Location	7	57	8	72 (43%)	24	42	11	77 (43%)
Resonable Cost	3	19	3	25 (15%)	5	11	5	21 (12%)
Someone Else's Suggestion	1	17	0	18 (11%)	4	11	1	16 (9%)
Convenient Hours	1	11	4	16 (9%)	7	11	1	19 (11%)
DSS. Staff's Suggestion	0	10	3	13 (8%)	8	5	1	14 (8%)
Only One I Knew About	0	5	0	5 (3%)	2	0	0	2 (1%)
Other:								
Quality Care	2	4	0	6 (4%)	8	6	1	15 (8%)
Children were Already There	1	2	0	3 (2%)	1	0	0	1 (1%)
Personally Knew Provider	0	3	0	3 (2%)	1	3	1	5 (3%)
Religious Reasons	1	1	0	2 (1%)	0	0	1	1 (1%)
Only One Available	0	0	0	0 -	2	2	0	4 (2%)
Client Works There	0	0	0	0 -	0	2	0	2 (1%)
Miscellaneous	1	4	1	6 (4%)	1	2	0	3 (2%)
Total Responses	17	133	19	169	63	95	22	180

1/ Each number represents the total number of times clients chose a given response as their 1st or 2nd most important reason for having selected their provider. Clients were divided between those who started day care before 4/1/83 and those who started after.

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time and seven (24%) did not know. At the time of placement, however, seven out of 28 (25%) said they were spending much more or somewhat more time with D.S.S. clients under the voucher system and only two (7%) reported much less or somewhat less time. Thirteen (46%) were spending neither more nor less time and seven (25%) did not know. Finally, only four out of 26 (15%) family and center respondents reported spending somewhat or much more time post-voucher than pre-voucher in contact with clients in post placement day-to-day activities. The remaining 22 spent neither more nor less time in this area or did not know one way or the other (58% and 27% respectively).

Exhibit 10 also indicates that clients paid more attention to quality of care since the voucher system was introduced. According to several respondents, increased involvement in day care decisions naturally leads to more attention to the quality of day care provided. As one staff member put it, "the parents pay more attention to the quality of care given their children since they are more involved in the process and carry responsibilities that would have been assumed by agency day care workers under the purchase of care system." A provider suggested that since parents have to find their own providers, they seem to be a little more involved with their children's week-to-week progress. Another provider explained that parents are more quality conscious because "they have to pay something." One parent offered a different slant, reporting that she was more careful (about quality) now because not all providers were licensed as was the case in the past.

There was some initial fear that clients might become too

selective and demanding and start moving their children from one provider to another more often than in the past, with potential adverse effects on the children themselves. It is not clear at this point whether that is happening. Pre-post data on client changes in provider were not available and staff responses to this question were mixed. Among ten staff members who responded to a question on the issue, four(40%) said that children were being changed from provider to provider neither more nor less frequently since the voucher was instituted, four(40%) said somewhat more or much more frequently, and two said much less frequently.

One staff member suggested in interviews that changes from provider to provider are due more to changes in provider circumstances than to clients' picking and choosing. In a cursory review of client files, the evaluation team found five client cases in which provider changes occurred during the voucher period. Of the five, two were due to changed client employment circumstances (new hours, etc.), one to the client's having moved, one to problems related to the child (constant crying), and one to the closing of a provider.

Modest Positive Effect on Clients' Work/School Behavior

The voucher system was expected by some to have a positive effect on client's ability to find and keep a job and to avoid absences and late arrivals at work or school. The hypothesis was that through the voucher approach, clients would be able to find providers more quickly with more convenient hours and location,

thus relieving key stresses on job acquisition and attendence. According to two of ten day care staff who responded, the voucher system had resulted in much greater client ability to find and keep a job and one out of ten cited fewer absences and late arrivals. However, the majority of these respondents felt there had been no change in these areas or simply did not know.

One of the staff responding positively noted that she was merely guessing: "Under the prior system, several clients lost prospective jobs through long waits for service and slow placement. Both are reduced under the new system."

Clients were asked the same questions. Of 27 veteran clients who were asked whether they had more or fewer absences and late arrivals at work or school due to child care problems since start of the voucher, two-thirds (18) said there had been no change, one-fifth (5) felt that they had fewer absences and late arrivals under the voucher, and three did not know. Of 25 who answered with respect to ease in finding or keeping a job, two-thirds (17) said the voucher had made no difference and one-third said it was much or somewhat easier.

Weak and Inconsistent Connection Between Voucher System and Improved Quality of Care

It was expected that the voucher system would contribute to the overall quality of day care available by promoting the development of an expanded, more competitive, pool of providers from whom clients could purchase services. It was also felt that, in the long run, veteran providers might improve services to retain the clients served under the prior POC system. The

survey results indicate that after about six months of voucher operation, client satisfaction with general quality of care is high -- higher than under POC. Day care staff felt no change had occurred and data obtained through professional assessment against standard rating criteria suggest that actual quality was slightly lower in several voucher centers than it had been in several other POC centers a year ago. None of these data are very definitive however, and it is still too early to make an assessment of voucher impact on quality of care.

The vast majority of clients were very satisfied with the quality of day care that their children were receiving at the time of the survey. Exhibit 11 shows that approximately four out of five clients were very satisfied and almost all the others were at least somewhat satisfied with the care being given. Among clients who had experience with both the purchase-of-care and the voucher systems, as many as 43% were either much more or somewhat more satisfied with the quality of care under the voucher system; the remaining majority reported no change in their satisfaction with the quality of care.

County day care staff were asked if quality of services among homes and centers that had been involved in POC had improved or worsened since implementation of the voucher system. Of the ten who responded, six felt that there had been no change in quality of services and four did not know. When asked if the addition of <u>new</u> providers since voucher introduction changed the general quality of available care, however, the result was a little more positive. One said quality had greatly increased, two reported it had increased somewhat, five reported no

Exhibit 11: CLIENT SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF DAY CARE (Percentages)

	Washington County	Anne Arundel County	Unidentified	All
1. General Satisfaction With Current Care	(n=46)	(n=132)	(n=24)	(n=202)
Very Satisfied	83%	77%	83%	79%
Somewhat Satisfied	15%	21%	8%	18%
Not Very Satisfied	2%	2%	-	2%
Not Satisfied At All	-	-	4%	>1%
Do Not Know	-	-	4%	>1%
2. Relative Satisfaction Now vs. Before Voucher System	(n=10)	(n=58)	(n=11)	(n=79)
Much More Satisfied Now	30%	29%	27%	29%
Somewhat More Satisfied	10%	17%	-	14%
Neither More Nor Less	60%	48%	64%	52%
Somewhat less satisfied	-	-	9%	1%
Much Less Satisfied	-	-	-	-
Do Not Know	-	5%	-	4%

change, and two did not know. One explanation given for the perceived increase in quality was that prior to the voucher system the rates were "so low that quality had been hard to find."

In October 1983, a State evaluation team conducted a very rough test of the hypothesis that the voucher system would encourage the influx of new and generally higher quality providers. Eleven day care centers located in the two voucher counties were visited and rated on seven subscales of the Harms and Clifford Early Childhood Evaluation Rating Scale.[6] None of the centers had been involved in the POC system; that is, all of them only began serving State-supported clients after vouchers were introduced. Ratings for these eleven centers were then compared to 1982 scores for 20 randomly selected POC centers in several Maryland counties along the Baltimore-Washington corridor. The same individuals conducted both waves of ratings.

Exhibits 12 and 13 present the results of the two sets of center ratings. On every one of the seven subscales, the voucher centers scored, on the average, slightly lower than had the contract centers the year before. The average total score for voucher centers (142) was in the "above minimum" range, while the average total score for contract centers (155) was in the higher "good" range.[7] These tentative results, then, do not

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[6] Thelma Harms and Richard M. Clifford, Early Childhood EnvironmentRating Scale, Teachers CollegePress, 1980). See Exhibit 14 for a description of the seven subscales.

[7] While average scores for the centers that entered the program after voucher were lower than the pre-voucher comparison group, none of the voucher centers fell below the "above minimum" level, as did three of the contract centers. (See Exhibit 13)

Exhibit 12:

Average Scores for Early Childhood Education Rating Scales

Subscales[a]	Total Possible Score	Average Score Contract Centers N = 20	Average Score Voucher Centers N = 11
Personal Care	35	22	18
Furnishings	35	22	20
Language Experience	28	18	15
Fine/Gross Motor	42	28	27
Creative Activities	49	29	28
Social Activities	42	21	20
Adult Needs	28	15	14
ALL SCALES	259	155	142

a - Subscales are described on

Exhibit 13:

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Applied to Day Care Centers

Scale[a]	Number of Centers: Contract Centers	Voucher Centers
Inadequate (0-37)	0	0
Below Mimimum (38-74)	0	0
Minimum (75- 111)	3	0
Above Mimimum (112 - 148)	5	8
Good (149 - 185)	9	3
Very Good (186 - 222)	3	0
Excellent (223 - 259)	0	0
TOTAL	20	11

a - Numbers in parentheses indicate the scores on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale.

Exhibit 14:

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE

The *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* gives an overall picture of the surroundings that have been created for the children and adults who share an early childhood setting.

Environment, as defined in this scale, includes: use of space, materials and experiences to enhance children's development, daily schedule, and supervision provided. This is a much broader definition of the word environment than is usual.

The seven areas covered in separate subscales*

Personal Care Routines of Children:

All routines associated with the comfort, health, and well-being of the children: for example, diapering, rest, and meals.

Furnishings and Display for Children:

Making available, taking care of, arranging, and using regularly with children the furniture, storage shelves, and display space necessary to provide personal care and an educational program.

Language-Reasoning Experiences:

Use of materials, activities, and teaching interactions to help children learn to communicate in words and to use relationships basic to thought, such as size relationships, cause and effect, steps in a sequence, and time relationships.

Fine and Gross Motor Activities:

Fine motor activities exercise the fine or small muscles, such as the muscles of the hand used in drawing, cutting with scissors, or picking up a small object. Since the coordination of the eye and the hand are usually needed for fine motor work, these activities are sometimes called perceptual-fine motor activities.

Gross motor activities exercise the gross or larger muscles, such as the muscles of the legs used in climbing and running or the muscles of the arms used in swinging.

Creative Activities:

Activities and materials, such as those used in art, block building, and dramatic play, are flexible, open-ended, do not have one right answer, and allow for a wide variety of constructive uses. Creative activities reflect the abilities and interests of children. (This section is omitted for rooms used exclusively for infants under nine months of age.)

Social Development:

Guiding the children's development of a good image of themselves and others and helping them to establish interaction skills.

Adult Needs:

Providing space and equipment for the key adults in the early childhood setting—the teachers and parents. Staff members have both personal comfort needs and professional needs for meeting their requirements in the teaching role. Parents have personal needs for reassurance and inclusion, as well as information and skill development needs to help them in their parenting role.

Opposite each page of the scale are detailed notes about many of the items. As you read the scale, refer to these notes to help clarify the meaning of the items. These detailed notes will also be helpful as reference points when two observers discuss their ratings. For example, if a teacher and director both have rated a room and are comparing their ratings, the "Notes for Clarification of Items" can be used to make sure that the items have been understood.

* For cautions on use of the various subscales, please see the final section on research and evaluation uses of the rating scale.

support the hypothesis of higher quality providers being attracted through the voucher system.

Generally High Satisfaction with the Voucher System

In general, clients, providers, and day care staff were quite satisfied with the voucher system as a means of providing and paying for State subsidized day care services. On a scale of 1.0 to 4.0 from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, respectively, the average response for all respondents was 3.6.

There were some differences among specific sub-groups, however, as indicated in Exhibit 15. Clients were the most satisfied with the voucher system (3.8 on a scale of 1.0 to 4.0) but as a group they tended to react more to the day care program as a whole than to the voucher mechanism for choosing and purchasing care. In their comments many clients expressed their sheer gratitude for "lifesaving" day care assistance. Only one client out of 175 (less than 1%) was dissatisfied with the voucher system.

When veteran clients were asked if they thought that the voucher system was better or worse than the approach used previously, the answers were strongly in the positive direction. Twenty-six out of 97 respondents (27%) said that the voucher system was much better, 17 (18%) said somewhat better, and only six (6%) somewhat worse. Twenty-one (22%) felt it was neither better nor worse, and 27 (28%) did not know.

Overall, providers were not as satisfied with the voucher system as were staff and clients. The average provider satisfaction score (3.3) was closer to "somewhat" satisfied than to "very". About one-sixth of all center and family providers

Exhibit 15: AVERAGE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THE VOUCHER SYSTEM
(4.0 = Very Satisfied, 1.0 = Very Dissatisfied) 1/

	Washington County	Anne Arundel County	Unidentified	All
Clients	3.9 (n=41)	3.8 (n=112)	3.8 (n=22)	3.8 (n=175)
Family Providers	3.5 (n=48)	3.0 (n=40)	3.3 (n=18)	3.3 2/ (n=106)
Center Providers	3.3 (n=7)	2.9 (n=14)	4.0 (n=3)	3.3 2/ (n=24)
Day Care Staff	4.0 (n=7)	3.4 (n=5)	-	3.8 (n=12)
All Respondents	3.7 (n=103)	3.5 (n=171)	3.6 (n=43)	3.6 (n=317)

1/ Staff respondents were asked, "Overall, are you satisfied with the voucher system for providing day care services?" Providers were asked, "How satisfied are you with the voucher system as a way of receiving payment from the Department of Social Services?" Clients were asked, "Overall, how satisfied are you with the voucher system for providing and paying for day care services?"

Satisfaction values were computed by weighting responses on a 4 to 1 scale (very satisfied = 4, somewhat satisfied = 3, somewhat dissatisfied = 2, and very dissatisfied = 1) and computing an average response score for each group.

2/ The Satisfaction scores for only those providers who were caring for DSS children at the time of the survey were 3.3 for family providers and 3.2 for center providers.

responding reported that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied.

There were some sizeable county differences in satisfaction with the voucher system. In general, respondents in Washington County were more satisfied than in Anne Arundel County, the difference being most dramatic among staff and then among family and center providers. The evaluation team's general impression gained from working with each county's staff throughout the voucher demostration tends to corroborate this finding. There appeared to be less enthusiasm and more skepticism about the voucher changeover among Anne Arundel county staff than among Washington County's. This is understandable, since in Anne Arundel County, the voucher represented a real change in how things had been done to date -- a change in procedures for a large number of clients and providers, as well as staff, that had been well established under the POC approach. Washington County, in contrast, had a very small day care program prior to voucher implementation, so the voucher was less a change in procedure than it was simply another element in a whole new program that was growing rapidly. During the early months of implementation, then, it is not suprising that the voucher should be viewed as more of a burden by Anne Arundel County respondents and more of an opportunity by Washington County.

Among the staff of both counties, the most frequently mentioned positive aspects of the voucher system were its provision of more choice, participation, and faster placement for day care clients. Staff also liked the additional responsibility the voucher system gave to providers, the consequent increase in the number of providers available to clients, the elimination of

contracting and other administrative tasks, and the ease of voucher administration. A few staff noted that they did not like voucher-induced paperwork and a few worried that the voucher might result in some clients going without necessities in order to pay for child care. Very few suggestions for improvement were made. One, to use a change form instead of issuing a new voucher every time client circumstances change, has already been implemented.

Providers, both family and center, most often mentioned that they liked the administrative advantages of the voucher system -- its convenience, efficiency, accuracy, and clear definition of responsibilities for all parties concerned. In the words of a few providers, the voucher system is "easy, just like taking attendence" and it "is very good in protecting all concerned." "When a client comes to meet you", wrote another,"the paperwork on the payment to be received from D.S.S.is already taken care of and walks in the door with the client...if there is a disagreement about the voucher, you can call D.S.S. about it while the client and providers are present together."

Other noted advantages of the voucher were guaranteed, and in some cases, quicker payment, increased parental choice and opportunity to ensure quality day care service, the ability to raise rates and closer contact with parents. One provider hailed the voucher as "a great way of having a signed agreement of payment between Social Services, the provider, and the client."

A large number of providers do not like the fact that they must wait from two to four or more weeks for payment. This minus

is not attributable to the voucher system, however; it is a longstanding problem of the day care program itself. Providers, particularly family providers, find the wait for payment from D.S.S. burdensome, especially when other clients typically pay in advance or immediately after service, on a weekly basis. One provider wrote "I cannot financially afford to provide service to more than two children because of the time involved in receiving payment." In her case, for example, payment form the early weeks of September was not received until mid-October.

The second most unlikeable aspect of the voucher from the perspective of providers was the paperwork involved. In addition to general annoyance with government red tape, some center providers reported specific difficulties, such as problems in matching data categories on the D.S.S. invoice forms to their own record categories and in totaling absences. One respondent suggested that providers be relieved of the paperwork burden by having the clients pay the full fee to the provider and then get reimbursed by the D.S.S.

Among other provider-generated suggestions for improving the voucher system two predominated: (1) pay weekly or bi-weekly, or at least at the end of the same month of service; and (2) improve the forms in use : provide larger spaces for writing in hours, make attendence records and invoices use the same monthly charts and symbols, clear up confusion between daily and weekly reporting, and clear up confusion between part-time and full-time hours.

Clients liked most the simplicity, convenience, and

effectiveness of the voucher system. The fact that they now had a choice among providers and that the latter got paid regularly and directly were cited as additional positive aspects. "I have been able to get babysitters with this system," is how one client put it; "I tried the previous method, and could very rarely find anyone that would even consider the low rate of pay." Another wrote: "I am now relaxed that my child is in a top quality day care facility and the sitter is being paid what she deserves for her service and won't ask me to leave so that another child paying more than I could replace mine."

Relatively few clients reported specific dissatisfactions with the voucher system (or day care as a whole). Among those mentioned, the more frequent were the following, in order of frequency:

-slowness in paying providers

-paperwork for providers

-too frequent (6 month) evaluations

-scarcity of registered providers in their area

-higher day care costs

-low State rates

-non coverage of costs for sitters during the evenings in client's home.

Suggestions for improvement tended to mirror the stated dislikes of the system/program. Beyond those, there were a few clients from each county who did suggest clearer explanations to providers on how to complete the forms and how payment occurs.

Summary

As with most evaluation studies, the findings reported in this chapter are mixed, with some more positive than others. After nine months, the fairest conclusion is that on the whole, the voucher demonstration in Washington and Anne Arundel Counties was a qualified success. Clients appeared to have a better choice among providers, more flexibility, quicker placements, and more involvement in day care decisionmaking. Relatively few clients were paying more for day care than under the POC system and the price increases were modest.

Providers as a group did not appear to mind the change to vouchers. Their biggest problem with the day care program, infrequent and slow payment, was unaffected by the voucher as such, but the conversion to computerized systems in the D.S.S. offices may have slowed things up a bit initially.

Payoffs in timeliness and efficiency are beginning to appear in the county offices, now that problems have been ironed out with the automated invoice processing, I&R system, and report generation. Overall, clients, providers and staff were quite satisfied with the voucher system.

DHR DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
STATE OF MARYLAND 300 WEST PRESTON STREET BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION TELEPHONE: 576-5285

September 19, 1983

Dear Day Care Worker:

As you know, the Departments of Social Services in Washington and Anne Arundel Counties have recently changed their system of providing day care assistance to eligible parents or guardians. Until April of this year, assistance was provided through purchase of care contracts with certain day care providers. In April, the two counties started using a voucher system, in which parents and guardians receive vouchers to purchase services from the provider of their choice.

Now that the voucher system has been operating for approximately six months, we are asking parents (or guardians), providers and Department of Social Services day care workers what they think of the new system. We are also asking for specific factual information that will help us determine whether the voucher system is working the way it was intended. The information we are collecting is a very important part of our effort to make the day care program the best that it can possibly be.

We would sincerely appreciate your help. Enclosed is a brief questionnaire that we hope you will complete and return as soon as possible. As you can see on the return envelope, completed questionnaires will be sent directly to James Bell and Associates, Inc., a research firm that we have hired to help conduct our study of the voucher system. Your answers to the questions will be kept strictly confidential and no one outside the firm will know whether you have returned the questionnaire or how you have answered the questions.

Please complete and return the questionnaire by October 5, 1983. We would appreciate your being as honest and accurate as you can in answering the questions. It is very important that every worker involved in the day care program in your county complete the questionnaire, so that we can get a full and accurate picture of how the voucher system has affected your county.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Joan M. Hildebrand

Joan M. Hildebrand, Ph.D.
Voucher Project Manager

P.S. In addition to receiving this questionnaire, several individuals will be contacted by telephone to answer some questions in depth. If you are called, we hope that you will be able to participate.

RUTH MASSINGA
Secretary

HARRY HUGHES
Governor

JAMES J. TRAGLIA
Deputy Secretary

APPENDIX 1

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

Maryland Day Care Voucher Demonstration (1983)

DAY CARE WORKER QUESTIONNAIRE

General Instructions: Please answer all the questions as honestly and as accurately as you can. If you need additional space to answer any question, please use the reverse side of the page. If you have any problem understanding a particular question, please do not hesitate to call James Bell and Associates, Inc., at (703) 528-3230.

Questions 1 - 5. Please consider your current day care responsibilities and clients for these questions. Use the time between April 1st and the present as your frame of reference.

1. What is the current average size of your day care caseload? ☐ clients

2. Approximately how many hours per week have you been devoting to duties related to the day care program? ☐ hours/week

3. Consider the total amount of time you spend on the day care program as divided into two types of effort: time spent on paperwork and administrative tasks versus time spent interviewing, counseling, and helping the clients directly. On the average, how many hours per week have you been spending lately on paperwork and other administrative tasks related to the day care program? And how many hours on client assistance activities?

Paperwork/Administrative: ☐ hours/week

Client Assistance: ☐ hours/week

4. For this question, please try to consider only the time spent on paperwork and administrative tasks. Considering <u>all</u> the cases you handle, approximately how many hours per week have you been spending on <u>paperwork/administrative activities</u> in the following areas (if you are not involved in a particular area, please leave it blank):

(a) Intake ☐ hours/week

(b) Issuance of Vouchers ☐ hours/week

(c) Invoice Processing (sending blank invoices to providers & processing those received): ☐ hours/week

(d) Continuing Case Management ☐ hours/week

(e) Redetermination ☐ hours/week

(f) Termination ☐ hours/week

5. On the average, how many calendar days elapse between a client's application for day care assistance and placement of the client's child(ren) in a day care program? ☐ days

<u>Questions 6 - 10</u>.
Now please try to remember what the situation was like one year ago, between April 1st and September 15th, 1982. Please answer questions 6 - 10 using that period of time as your frame of reference. If you were not working in the day care program at that time, please go to question 25.

6. What was the average size of your day care caseload during that period of time? ☐ clients

7. Approximately how many hours per week did you devote to duties related to the day care program? ☐ hours/week

Were you performing different tasks related to the program during that time? If so, please describe the differences between what you were doing then and what you are doing now:

8. Consider the total amount of time you spent on the day care program as divided into two types of effort: time spent on paperwork and administrative tasks versus time spent interviewing, counseling and helping the client directly. On the average, how many hours per week did you spend on paperwork and other administrative tasks related to the day care program? And how many hours on client assistance activities?

Paperwork/Administrative: ☐ hours/week

Client Assistance: ☐ hours/week

9. Considering all the cases you handled, approximately how many hours per week did you use to spend on paperwork/administrative activities in the following areas (if you were not involved in a particular activity, please leave it blank):

(a) Intake ☐ hours/week

(b) Issuance of Vouchers ☐ hours/week

(c) Invoice Processing ☐ hours/week

(d) Continuing Case Management ☐ hours/week

(e) Redetermination ☐ hours/week

(f) Termination ☐ hours/week

10. On the average, how many calendar days elapsed between a client's application for day care assistance and placement of the client's child(ren) in a day care program? ☐ days

11. The change to a voucher system has been accompanied by other developments during the past year, most notably the installation of a computerized information system. Considering the impact of the voucher system alone on your day-to-day administration of the day care program, which one of the following statements is most accurate? Circle one:

a. The voucher system has greatly reduced the average amount of time per case that I spend on paperwork and administrative tasks.

b. The voucher system has reduced to some extent the average amount of time per case that I spend on paperwork and administrative tasks.

c. The voucher system has had no effect one way or the other on the average amount of time per case that I spend on paperwork and administrative tasks.

d. The voucher system has increased to some extent the average amount of time per case that I spend on paperwork and administrative tasks.

e. The voucher system has greatly increased the average amount of time per case that I spend on paperwork and administrative tasks.

f. I don't know.

12. Considering the impact of the computerized data system alone on your day-to-day administration of the day care program, which phrase best describes its impact on the average amount of time per case that you spend on paperwork and administrative tasks? Circle one:

a. greatly reduced the amount of time

b. reduced the amount of time to some extent

c. has had no effect one way or the other

d. increased the amount of time to some extent

e. greatly increased the amount of time

f. I don't know.

13. Considering the impact of the voucher system alone on the amount of elapsed time between a client's application for day care assistance and placement of the client's child(ren) in a program, which phrase best describes its impact on the average amount of elapsed time? Circle one:

a. greatly reduced the amount of elapsed time

b. reduced the amount of elapsed time to some extent

c. has had no effect one way or the other

d. has increased to some extent the amount of elapsed time

e. has greatly increased the amount of elapsed time

f. I don't know

14. Considering the impact of the computerized data system on the amount of elapsed time between a client's application and placement, which phrase best describes its impact? Circle one:

a. greatly reduced the amount of elapsed time

b. reduced the amount of elapsed time to some extent

c. has had no effect one way or the other

d. has increased the amount of elapsed time to some extent

e. has greatly increased the amount of elapsed time

f. I don't know

Questions 15 - 24. In these questions, please try to consider whether the voucher system has had an impact on various aspects of the day care service situation.

15. In your opinion, as a result of the voucher system, are clients now more, or less, involved in making day care decisions for their children? Please circle one:

a. Much more involved

b. Somewhat more involved

c. Neither more nor less involved

d. Somewhat less involved

e. Much less involved

f. I don't know

If clients are more or less involved, how so? Can you provide a specific example?

16. In your opinion, as a result of the voucher system, has there been any change in the client's choice among day care providers? Circle one:

a. Choice is now much better

b. Choice is now somewhat better

c. Choice has not changed

d. Choice is now somewhat worse

e. Choice is now much worse

f. I don't know

If choice is now better or worse, in what way?

Why has it changed?

17. In your opinion, are clients' choices of providers more appropriate, or less appropriate, for their situations than the choices made by day care staff in pre-voucher days? Please circle one:

a. Clients' choices are much more appropriate now

b. Clients' choices are somewhat more appropriate now

c. There has been no change

d. Clients' choices are somewhat less appropriate now

e. Clients' choices are much less appropriate now

f. I don't know.

If clients' choices are more appropriate, or less appropriate, now, please provide a specific example:

18. As a result of the new voucher system, do clients pay more, or less, attention to the quality of care given their children? Circle one:

a. Much more attention now

b. Somewhat more attention now

c. Neither more nor less attention now

d. Somewhat less attention now

e. Much less attention now

f. I don't know

If more or less attention now, how so? Can you provide a specific example?

19. As a result of the new voucher system, has there been any change in the way priority clients are being served by the program? Circle one:

a. Priority clients are much better served now

b. Priority clients are somewhat better served now

c. No change

d. Priority clients are somewhat more poorly served now

e. Priority clients are much more poorly served now

f. I don't know

If priority clients are now served better, or more poorly, how so? Can you provide a specific example?

20. Among homes/centers that had purchase-of-care agreements before the voucher system was introduced, has the quality of services improved or worsened since implementation of the voucher system? Circle one:

a. Quality of services has greatly improved

b. Quality of services has somewhat improved

c. There has been no change in the quality of services

d. Quality of services has worsened somewhat

e. Quality of services has greatly worsened

f. I don't know

If quality of services has improved or worsened, how so? Can you give a specific example?

21. Since implementation of the voucher system, has the addition of new day care providers increased or decreased the general quality of the day care available to clients receiving assistance? Circle one:

a. General quality has greatly increased

b. General quality has increased somewhat

c. There has been no change in the general quality

d. General quality has decreased somewhat

e. General quality has greatly decreased

f. I don't know

If general quality has increased or decreased, how so? Can you provide a specific example?

22. Are children now being changed from one provider to another more, or less, frequently than they were prior to the voucher system? Circle one:

a. Much more frequently

b. Somewhat more frequently

c. Neither more nor less frequently

d. Somewhat less frequently

e. Much less frequently

f. I don't know

If more or less frequently, why?

What effect is this having on the children? Can you give any specific examples?

(23.) Are clients experiencing more or fewer child care related work absences or late arrivals <u>as a result of</u> the voucher system? Circle one:

a. Much more absences/late arrivals

b. Somewhat more absences/late arrivals

c. Neither more nor fewer absences/late arrivals

d. Somewhat fewer absences/late arrivals

e. Much fewer absences/late arrivals

f. I don't know

If more or fewer absences, late arrivals, why?

(24.) Are clients more, or less, able to find and keep jobs <u>as a result of</u> the voucher system?

a. Much more able

b. Somewhat more able

c. Neither more nor less able

d. Somewhat less able

e. Much less able

f. I don't know

If they are now more or less able to find and keep jobs, why? Can you give a specific illustration?

Questions 25 - 31. The following questions deal with your opinions toward the voucher system in general and the way it was implemented.

25. Overall, are you satisfied with the voucher system for providing day care services? Please circle one:

a. Very satisfied

b. Somewhat satisfied

c. Somewhat dissatisfied

d. Very dissatisfied

e. I have no opinion

26. What, specifically, do you like about the voucher system?

27. What, specifically, don't you like about the voucher system?

28. How could the voucher system be improved? Please be specific.

29. Have there been any specific problems with the way the voucher system was initially implemented? If so, please give details and examples.

30. Were resources adequate for installation of the voucher system? If not, what was lacking?

31. Please give any other comments you'd like to make about the voucher system, or the demonstration project as a whole:

Thank you very much. Please use the envelope provided and mail this questionnaire as soon as you can.

DHR DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
STATE OF MARYLAND 300 WEST PRESTON STREET BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION TELEPHONE: 576-5285

September 19, 1983

Dear Day Care Provider:

As you know, the Departments of Social Services in Washington and Anne Arundel Counties have recently changed their system of providing day care assistance to eligible parents or guardians. Until April of this year, assistance was provided through purchase of care contracts with certain day care providers. In April, the two counties started using a voucher system, in which parents and guardians receive vouchers to purchase services from the provider of their choice.

Now that the voucher system has been operating for approximately six months, we are asking parents (or guardians), providers and Department of Social Services day care workers what they think of the new system. We are also asking for specific factual information that will help us determine whether the voucher system is working the way it was intended. The information we are collecting is a very important part of our effort to make the day care program the best that it can possibly be.

We would sincerely appreciate your help. Enclosed is a brief questionnaire that we hope you will complete and return as soon as possible. As you can see on the return envelope, completed questionnaires will be sent directly to James Bell and Associates, Inc., a research firm that we have hired to help conduct our study of the voucher system. Your answers to the questions will be kept strictly confidential and no one outside the firm will know whether you have returned the questionnaire or how you have answered the questions.

Please complete and return the questionnaire by October 15, 1983. We would appreciate your being as honest and accurate as you can in answering the questions. The information you provide will be very important to the success of our program.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Joan M. Hildebrand, Ph.D.
Voucher Project Manager

P.S. In addition to receiving this questionnaire, several individuals will be contacted by telephone to answer some questions in depth. If you are called, we hope that you will be able to participate.

Maryland Day Care Voucher Demonstration (1983)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROVIDERS OF DAY CARE SERVICES

General Instructions. Please begin with Question 1, and continue answering questions until instructed otherwise. (Depending on some of your answers, you may be asked to skip one or more questions—please be careful to follow the instructions as you go along.)

If you need addtional space to answer any question, please use the reverse side of the page. We would appreciate any comments you may wish to make on any of the questions, even if we do not specifically ask for comments.

1. Are you classified as a "family" or a "center" provider? Please check one:

☐ Family
☐ Center

2. When did your home or center begin providing day care services?

[/]
Month/Year

3. Are you willing, at this time, to accept children who receive day care assistance from the Dept. of Social Services? Please check one:

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you checked "yes" for Question 3, please go directly to Question 4.

If you checked "no" for Question 3, please answer Question 3a and then go to Question .

3a. Why do you prefer not to accept children who receive assistance from the Department of Social Services?

Is the voucher system part of your reason for not accepting children who receive assistance? Please check one, and then go to Question .

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. How many children who receive assistance from the Department of Social Services (through vouchers) are currently under your care?

☐ Children

5. How many clients (parents/guardians) does that involve? (It is possible to have fewer clients, since you may be caring for two or more children from the same family.)

☐ Clients

6. Were you accepting children with assistance from the Department of Social Services before the voucher system started (that is, before April 1, 1983?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered "yes" to Question 6, please go to Question 9. If you answered "no," please continue with Question 7.

7. Why weren't you accepting children with assistance from the Dept. of Social Services during the period before April 1, 1983?

8. Did the voucher system change your mind about accepting children with assistance from the Dept. of Social Services? ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. As a day care provider, you have to spend a certain amount of time getting new clients. For example, it takes time to answer questions and show your home or center to potential clients, to supply references, to set up payment arrangements, and so on. Considering the period of time since the voucher system began in April, do you think that you have been spending more time, or less time, on these new client activities with clients receiving assistance than you were before the voucher system began? Please check one:

☐ I have been spending more time on new client activities since the voucher system began.

☐ I have been spending less time.

☐ I have not been spending any more or any less time.

☐ I don't know.

If you are spending <u>more</u> time, in what specific activities are you spending more time?

If you are spending <u>less</u> time, in what specific activities are you spending less time?

10. In addition to starting up new clients, you have to spend a certain amount of time on administrative details for your clients throughout the period you are caring for their children. For example, you have to submit invoices for payment from the Department of Social Services, and so on. Considering the period of time since the voucher system began in April, do you think that you have been spending more time, or less time, on these routine activities for those clients who receive assistance than you were spending before the voucher system?

- ☐ I have been spending more time on routine activities since the voucher system began.
- ☐ I have been spending less time.
- ☐ I have not been spending any more or any less time.
- ☐ I don't know.

If you are spending more time, in what specific activities are you spending more time?

If you are spending less time, in what specific activities are you spending less time?

11. Considering your clients who receive assistance from the Dept. of Social Services, do you think that you are spending more time, or less time, in contact with parents or guardians at the time of placement than you did before the voucher system? Please check one:

- ☐ I spend much more time with parents at placement now than I did before the voucher system.
- ☐ I spend somewhat more time.
- ☐ I spend neither more nor less time.
- ☐ I spend somewhat less time.
- ☐ I spend much less time.
- ☐ I don't know.

12. Considering your clients who receive assistance from the Dept. of Social Services, do you think that you are spending more time, or less time, in contact with parents or guardians in day-to-day activities (after placement) than you did before the voucher system? Please check one:

- ☐ I spend much more time with parents in day-to-day activities now than I did before the voucher system.
- ☐ I spend somewhat more time.
- ☐ I spend neither more nor less time.
- ☐ I spend somewhat less time.
- ☐ I spend much less time.
- ☐ I don't know.

13. Under the voucher system, are you spending more time, or less time, on preparing invoices for payment from the Dept. of Social Services than you did previously? Please check one:

- ☐ More time: How many more hours per week? ☐ hours
- ☐ Less time. How many fewer hours per week? ☐ hours
- ☐ Neither more nor less time.
- ☐ I don't know.

14. Under the voucher system, does it take more time, or less time, for you to receive payment from the Dept. of Social Services once you have submitted an invoice? Please check one:

- ☐ More time: How many more days? ☐ days
- ☐ Less time: How many fewer days? ☐ days
- ☐ Neither more nor less time.
- ☐ I don't know.

15. During the months listed below, what was your capacity (number of day care places) and your average daily enrollment (number of children actually attending)? Please fill in the blank boxes below. If you cannot supply this information, please go on to the next question.

Month	Capacity	Enrollment
April, 1982		
May, 1982		
June, 1982		
July, 1982		
August, 1982		
April, 1983		
May, 1983		
June, 1983		
July, 1983		
August, 1983		

16. In general, do you think the voucher system has made it easier or more difficult for you to keep the number of children you serve at the highest possible level? Please check one:

- ☐ The voucher system has made it much easier.
- ☐ The voucher system has made it somewhat easier.
- ☐ The voucher system has made it neither easier nor more difficult.
- ☐ The voucher system has made it somewhat more difficult.
- ☐ The voucher system has made it much more difficult.
- ☐ I don't know.

17. Under the new voucher system, do you feel that clients (those who receive assistance from the Dept. of Social Services) have become more, or less, selective in choosing a day care program for their children than they were previously? Please check one:

- ☐ Clients are much more selective now under the voucher system.
- ☐ Clients are somewhat more selective.
- ☐ Clients are neither more nor less selective.
- ☐ Clients are somewhat less selective.
- ☐ Clients are much less selective.
- ☐ I don't know.

If they are more, or less, selective, what are they doing differently now?

18. Under the voucher system, do clients (those who receive assistance from the Dept. of Social Services) appear to be more involved, or less involved, in the day care planning and decisions regarding their children? Please check one:

- ☐ Much more involved under the voucher system.
- ☐ Somewhat more involved.
- ☐ Neither more nor less involved than previously.
- ☐ Somewhat less involved.
- ☐ Much less involved.
- ☐ I don't know.

If they are more involved, or less involved, how so? Can you give a specific example?

19. Under the new voucher system, have clients (those receiving assistance from the Dept. of Social Services) become more concerned, or less concerned, about the quality of care being given their children? Please check one:

- ☐ Much more concerned under the voucher system.
- ☐ Somewhat more concerned under the voucher system.
- ☐ Neither more nor less concerned.
- ☐ Somewhat less concerned.
- ☐ Much more concerned.
- ☐ I don't know.

If they have become more or less concerned, what are they doing differently?

Why do you think they are now more or less concerned?

20. Are your rates for child care higher now than they were before the voucher system (April, 1983)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered "yes," how much more per child per day do you charge now than you did before the voucher system? (For example, if you charged $8 per day before April 1st, and you now charge $9.50 per day, your answer would be $1.50.)

$ ☐ More per day.

If you have raised rates, did the voucher system have anything to do with your decision to raise rates? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how so?

21. How satisfied are you with the voucher system as a way of receiving payment from the Dept. of Social Services? Please check one:

- ☐ Very satisfied.
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied.
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied.
- ☐ Very dissatisfied.

22. What do you like about the voucher system?

23. What don't you like about the voucher system?

24. How could the voucher system be improved? Please be as specific as you can

25. Were there any specific problems with the way the voucher system was started up last April?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know.

If yes, please give details of problems:

26. Do you have any other comments on the voucher system?

Thank you very much for your help. Please use the envelope provided and mail this questionnaire as soon as you possibly can.

Exhibit 1: PROVIDER SUB-GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Master Questionnaire Item	Form P-A	Form P-B	Form P-B
1	X	X	X
2	X	X	X
3	X	X	X
4	X	X	X
5	X	X	X
6	X	X	X
7	X	X	X
8	X	X	X
9	X		
10	X		
11		X	
12		X	
13	X	X	X
14	X	X	X
15			X
16			X
17	X		
18		X	
19			X
20	X	X	X
21	X	X	X
22	X	X	X
23	X	X	X
24	X	X	X
25	X	X	X
26	X	X	X

DHR DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
STATE OF MARYLAND 300 WEST PRESTON STREET BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION TELEPHONE 576-5285

October 29, 1983

Dear Day Care Parent:

As you may know, the Departments of Social Services in Washington and Anne Arundel Counties have recently changed their system of providing day care assistance to eligible parents or guardians. Until April of this year, assistnace was provided through pruchase of care contracts with certain day care providers. In April, the two counties started using a voucher system, in which parents and guardians receive vouchers to purchase services from the provider of their choice.

Now that the voucher system has been operating for approximately six months, we are asking parents (or guardians), providers and Department of Social Services day care workers what they think of the new system. We are also asking for specific factual information that will help us determine whether the voucher system is working the way it was intended. The information we are collecting is a very important part of our effort to make the day care program the best that it can possibly be.

We would sincerely appreciate your help. Enclosed is a brief questionnaire that we hope you will complete and return as soon as possible. As you can see on the return envelope, completed questionnaires will be sent directly to James Bell and Associates, Inc., a research firm that we have hired to help conduct our study of the voucher system. Your answers to the questions will be kept strictly confidential and no one outside the firm will know whether you have returned the questionnaire or how you have answered the questions.

Please complete and return the questionnaire by November 15, 1983. We would appreciate your being as honest and accurate as you can in answering the questions. The information you provide will be very important to the success of our program.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Joan M. Hildebrand, Ph.D.
Voucher Project Manager

P.S. In addition to receiving this questionnaire, several individuals will be contacted by telephone to answer some questions in depth. If you are called, we hope that you will be able to participate.

RUTH MASSINGA
Secretary

HARRY HUGHES
Governor

JAMES J. TRAGLIA
Deputy Secretary

Maryland Day Care Voucher Demonstration (1983)

PARENT/GUARDIAN QUESTIONNAIRE

General Instructions: Please answer the questions as honestly and as accurately as you can. Depending on some of your answers, you may be asked to skip one or more questions that follow. Please pay close attention to specific instructions in the boxes.

1. How many children do you have in day care? ☐ Children

2. Please give the ages of your children who are in day care and the number of hours per week that they spend in day care:

Oldest child in day care:

Age: ☐

Number of hours/week in day care: ☐

Second child in day care:

Age: ☐

Number of hours/week in day care: ☐

Third child in day care:

Age: ☐

Number of hours/week in day care: ☐

Fourth child in day care:

Age: ☐

Number of hours/week in day care: ☐

3. Please tell us why your child (or children) is in day care. Check the one reason that best applies to you:

- ◯ I work full-time.
- ◯ I work part-time.
- ◯ I am in school full-time.
- ◯ I am in school part-time.
- ◯ I am looking for a job.
- ◯ Day care is part of a protective services plan.
- ◯ I have a different reason. It is: _____

_____.

4. When did you first start receiving day care assistance from the Department of Social Services? [/] Month/Year

5. When you <u>first started</u> receiving day care services, did you receive personal help in developing a day care plan from staff at the Dept. of Social Services? ◯ Yes ◯ No

If yes, how helpful were those staff in your developing a plan and locating day care for your children? Please check one:

- ◯ Very helpful.
- ◯ Somewhat helpful.
- ◯ Not very helpful.
- ◯ Not helpful at all.

6. When you <u>first started</u> receiving day care assistance, did you receive any written materials to help you plan and locate day care? ◯ Yes ◯ No

If yes, how helpful were those materials? Please check one:

- ◯ Very helpful.
- ◯ Somewhat helpful.
- ◯ Not very helpful.
- ◯ Not helpful at all.

7. Why did you select the particular day care provider that you did? Please place a "1" before the most important reason, and a "2" before the next most important reason:

- ◯ Convenient location.
- ◯ Reasonable cost.
- ◯ Convenient hours.
- ◯ It was the only one I knew about.
- ◯ Someone else (a friend/relative) suggested I try it.
- ◯ Staff at the Department of Social Services suggested I try it.
- ◯ A different reason. It is: _____
  _____.
- ◯ A different reason. It is: _____
  _____.

8. About how many day care providers (homes, centers) did you visit when you were first choosing day care services? ☐ Providers

9. How long did it take between application to the Dept. of Social Services for day care assistance and actual placement of your children? ☐ Days

10. About how much of your own time did it take you to select a day care provider and make arrangements to have your children receive services? If you placed more than one child, please estimate the total time for all your children.) ☐ Hours

11. How much in day care fees do you currently pay, out of your own pocket, for day care for your children? Please estimate in dollars per week. $ ☐ /week

12. If you are not paying any day care fees out of your own pocket, please skip this question. If you <u>are</u> paying some part of your day care expenses out of your own pocket, please tell us <u>why</u>. Check the reason that most fits your situation:

- ◯ Because the provider I have been using since before the voucher system began has recently raised rates above what the Dept. of Social Services will contribute.
- ◯ Because I have chosen to place my children with a better quality provider who charges me more for services than previous providers.
- ◯ Because my income situation has improved recently, and I now get a smaller amount of assistance from the Dept. of Social Services.
- ◯ None of these reasons. My reason is the following: _____

_____.

13. In general, how satisfied are you with the quality of day care that your children are now receiving? Please check one:

- ◯ Very satisfied.
- ◯ Somewhat satisfied.
- ◯ Not very satisfied.
- ◯ Not satisfied at all.
- ◯ I don't know.

If you are not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all, please tell us why:

If you were receiving day care services before April 1, 1983, please go on to Question .

If you were not receiving day care services before April 1, 1983, please go to Question .

15. Since the voucher system started (April 1st), have you been paying more, or less, out of your own pocket for day care services than you were paying before the voucher system started (before April 1st)? When answering this question, please be sure to consider only how much you are paying for the same number of children and the same number of hours of day care as you were getting before the voucher system. Please check one:

- ◯ I am paying more now. How much more per week? $ ____ more per week.
- ◯ I am paying less now. How much less per week: $ ____ less per week.
- ◯ I am paying no more and no less than I was before April 1st.
- ◯ I don't know.

If you are now paying more or less, how has this increase or decrease affected your budget? In other words, have you had to give up something or have you been able to afford something as a result?

16. Do you feel that, as a result of the voucher system, you now have a better choice, or a worse choice, among available providers of day care services than you had before the voucher system? Please check one:

- ◯ The choices are much better now.
- ◯ The choices are somewhat better now.
- ◯ The choices haven't gotten better or worse.
- ◯ The choices are somewhat worse now.
- ◯ The choices are much worse now.
- ◯ I don't know.

If your choices have become better or worse, in what way?

17. Do you feel that, as a result of the voucher system, you are now more involved, or less involved, in making day care decisions for your children than you were before the voucher system? Please check one:

- ◯ I am much more involved now.
- ◯ I am somewhat more involved now.
- ◯ I am neither more nor less involved now.
- ◯ I am somewhat less involved now.
- ◯ I am much less involved now.
- ◯ I don't know.

If you are more or less involved now, how has your involvement changed?

18. Do you feel that, as a result of the voucher system, you now pay more attention, or less attention, to the quality of the care being given to your children? Please check one:

- ◯ I pay much more attention now.
- ◯ I pay somewhat more attention now.
- ◯ I pay neither more nor less attention now.
- ◯ I pay somewhat less attention now.
- ◯ I pay much less attention now.
- ◯ I don't know.

If you pay more or less attention to quality of care now, what are you doing differently?

19. Are you more satisfied, or less satisfied, with the quality of the care being given your children now than you were before the voucher system began (before April 1st)? Please check one:

- ◯ I am much more satisfied now.
- ◯ I am somewhat more satisfied now.
- ◯ I am neither more nor less satisfied now.
- ◯ I am somewhat less satisfied now.
- ◯ I am much less satisfied now.
- ◯ I don't know.

If you are more or less satisfied now, why?

20. Since the start of the voucher system, have you had more or fewer absences and late arrivals at work or school due to child care problems? Please check one:

- ◯ I do not work or go to school.
- ◯ Many more absences and late arrivals now than before.
- ◯ Some more absences and late arrivals now than before.
- ◯ There has been no change in this area.
- ◯ Some fewer absences and late arrivals now than before.
- ◯ Many fewer absences and late arrivals now than before.
- ◯ I don't know.

21. Has the voucher system made it easier or harder for you to find or keep a job? Please check one:

- ◯ I do not work and I have not been looking for a job.
- ◯ The voucher system has made it much easier to find or keep a job.
- ◯ The voucher system has made it somewhat easier to find or keep a job.
- ◯ The voucher system has not made any difference in this area.
- ◯ The voucher system has made it somewhat more difficult to find or keep a job.
- ◯ The voucher system has made it much more difficult to find or keep a job.
- ◯ I don't know.

22. Overall, do you think that the voucher system is better or worse than the approach used before the voucher system? Please check one:

- ◯ The voucher system is much better.
- ◯ The voucher system is somewhat better.
- ◯ The voucher system is neither better nor worse than the previous system.
- ◯ The voucher system is somewhat worse.
- ◯ The voucher system is much worse.
- ◯ I don't know.

If you think that the voucher system is better or worse than the previous approach, how is it better or how is it worse?

23. Overall, how satisfied are you with the voucher system for providing and paying for day care services? Please check one:

- ◯ I am very satisfied with the voucher system.
- ◯ I am somewhat satisfied with the voucher system.
- ◯ I am somewhat dissatisfied with the voucher system.
- ◯ I am very dissatisfied with the voucher system.
- ◯ I don't know.

24. What do you like about the voucher system?

25. What don't you like about the voucher system?

Department of Human Resources

CODE OF MARYLAND REGULATIONS
07.02.18

Annotated Code of Maryland
Article 88A, §§32D — 32H

Family Day Care

PS 014450

1100 North Eutaw Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Title 07
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Subtitle 02 SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Chapter 18 Family Day Care Registration

Authority: Article 88A, §§32D — 32H, Annotated Code of Maryland

.01 Purpose.

Registration for family day care homes is established for the purpose of carrying out the policy of this State to encourage the development of day care services for children in a safe, healthful, and homelike environment. The purpose of registration is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of children and to provide technical assistance and child care information.

.02 Definitions.

A. The following terms have the meanings indicated.

B. Terms Defined.

(1) "Child" means a person under 18 years old.

(2) "Department" means the Maryland Department of Human Resources.

(3) "Family day care" means care given instead of parental care to a child in a residence other than the child's for less than 24 hours and for which money is paid.

(4) "Family day care home" means the residence of the provider in which family day care is provided.

(5) "Infant" means a child under 2 years old.

(6) "Local department" means a local department of social services in a county or in Baltimore City.

(7) "Parent" means the biological or adoptive parent or the legal guardian or the custodian of the child.

(8) "Provider" means the adult who has primary responsibility for the operation of family day care in the day care home.

(9) "Relative" means a person related to a child by blood, marriage, or adoption and includes parent, grandparent, brother, sister,

step-parent, step-sister, step-brother, uncle, aunt, cousin, great grandparent, great uncle, and great aunt.

(10) "Substitute" means an adult who has responsibility for the operation of a provider's family day care home when the provider is absent.

.03 Registration Requirements.

A. A provider and the residence in which the provider provides care is required to be registered.

B. Exemptions from Registration. The following are not required to be registered:

(1) A relative;

(2) A friend of the child's parents who provides care on a non-regular basis for less than 20 hours a month; or

(3) A person who has received the care of the child from a child placement agency licensed by the Department.

C. Registration of the Provider.

(1) In order to be registered, a provider shall:

(a) Be 18 years old or older;

(b) Neither have a verifiable history of child mistreatment nor be currently under investigation for suspected child abuse or neglect;

(c) Be in physical and mental health adequate to provide care;

(d) Have satisfactory character references;

(e) Have no criminal record or charges that indicate behavior harmful to children.

(2) A substitute, selected by the provider, shall complete the Department's form for substitutes.

(3) Other residents of the family day care home shall be required to meet the standards in §C(1)(b) and (e), above.

D. Registration of the Family Day Care Home.

(1) In order to be registered, the family day care home shall have:

(a) Hot and cold running water;

(b) Functioning smoke detectors;

(c) Operable telephones;

(d) Inside bathroom facilities that are in good working condition;

(e) Sewage disposal and drinking water that meet local codes;

(f) Utility services for cooking, heating, and light;

(g) Operable and safe heating and cooling systems;

(h) An operable refrigerator and stove; and

(i) Ample accessible space for outdoor activity free from conditions which may be dangerous to the life or health of children.

(2) The home shall have:

(a) Furniture and equipment, including adequate facilities for napping which are comfortable, durable, safe, and adapted to the ages of the children for whom the care is to be provided;

(b) Adequate supplies of clean bed linen;

(c) Individual utensils for eating; and

(d) Individual toilet articles for washing and grooming.

(3) All food shall be stored in a place which will protect it against invasion of rodents, insects, dust, water leakage, and other sources of contamination.

(4) All perishables such as milk and meat shall be refrigerated below 45°F.

(5) Cracked or chipped china may not be used and single service items (plastic spoons, paper plates, and cups) may be used only once.

(6) All utensils used for food preparation and service shall be washed in hot water, rinsed, air dried, and stored in a clean place.

(7) The temperature in any room where the children are in care should meet environmental standards for reasonable comfort, health, and safety.

(8) When children are transported while in care, the vehicle shall be equipped with restraints as required by Maryland law.

.04 Application Process.

A. A person who wants to operate a family day care home shall file a complete written application with the local department. The complete application shall include:

(1) A completed application form;

(2) A report of a physical examination within the last 12 months of the provider and all household residents;

(3) A home fire and safety checklist completed by the applicant; and

(4) The completed form for a substitute.

B. The applicant shall pay any fees for any physical examination required.

.05 Local Department Response to Application.

A. The local department shall receive the completed application and make a thorough evaluation of each family day care home and provider including:

(1) A visit to the home and an interview with the provider to determine that the home is free of safety and health hazards;

(2) A check for any criminal record or current criminal charges against the provider and all residents of the household;

(3) An evaluation of the report of the medical examinations;

(4) An evaluation of responses from the references provided by the applicant; and

(5) A determination of the number of children that may be cared for in the home.

B. The local department may not issue the certificate of registration until the approved applicant has completed the orientation session.

C. If the decision is to deny the application, the local department shall include in the notice:

(1) The reason for denial;

(2) The specific regulation that is the basis for the decision; and

(3) Information regarding an appeal for a fair hearing.

D. A certificate of registration is valid for 2 years from the date of issuance, unless suspended or revoked.

E. The local department shall dispose of the application by issuance of the certificate of registration or by denial within 60 days from receipt of the completed application. If the application is approved, the written notice shall include a designation of the number of children that may be cared for in the home.

.06 Reasons for Denial.

A certificate of registration may be denied if:

A. The applicant prevents the local department from completing its responsibility for registration, including failure to attend the orientation session;

B. An evaluation of the medical form results in a decision that the applicant has physical or mental health inadequate to provide day care;

C. An evaluation of the home fire and safety checklist results in a decision that the home is not safe;

D. An evaluation of the criminal record of the applicant or of residents in the household reveals criminal charges that indicate behavior that is harmful to children or the applicant, or residents of the applicant's household have pending criminal charges that indicate behavior that is harmful to children;

E. An evaluation of the application forms reveals that false information was reported;

F. A visit to the home showed that the home is not physically safe or healthful;

G. An interview with the provider shows evidence that the provider cannot provide for the welfare of the children in care.

H. The provider or the home does not meet the requirements for Family Day Care Registration.

.07 Local Department Responsibilities.

A. The Department shall provide an orientation session that explains the registration regulations, the right to appeal and the procedures for an administrative appeal, and reviews the guidelines for the provision of day care.

B. The local department shall make an inspection of each family day care home at least once every 2 years.

C. The local department is authorized to make unannounced visits.

D. The local department may issue a provisional registration for a period not to exceed 120 days where the local department has determined that the health and safety of the children in care is not endangered.

E. When an inspection of a registered home reveals a failure to comply with these regulations, the local department shall issue a warning letter. This letter shall include a statement of the deficiency found, the regulation violated, and that the correction must be made within 30 days. The letter shall also state that a failure to correct the deficiency within the time set may result in the suspension or revocation of the registration. However, if the local department ascertains that the deficiency has not been corrected within 30 days, the local department shall follow the requirements of Regulations .12 or .13, below, to suspend or revoke the registration.

F. The local department shall offer technical assistance and child care information to the provider.

.08 Procedures to be Followed by the Department in Response to Complaints about a Family Day Care Home.

A. When the local department receives a complaint regarding a family day care home the local department shall:

(1) Investigate any complaint received by making a visit to the home; and

(2) Evaluate the complaint and make a written report for the local department file within 30 days.

B. The local department shall advise the complainant and the provider of the local department's evaluation of the complaint and the action to be taken.

.09 Provider Responsibilities.

A. The provider shall give the parent of each child enrolled in the home a copy of the pamphlet, "Family Day Care, A Guide For Parents".

B. The provider may designate a substitute who is available to care for the children in the provider's absence. A substitute may not care for children for a total of more than 10 working days per year, unless the local department determines that the additional time is justified.

C. The provider shall provide food or make arrangements with the parent for the provision of food.

D. The provider shall maintain an operating telephone in the family day care home.

E. The provider shall maintain on file with the local department the department's form regarding substitutes.

F. The provider or the substitute shall be physically present at the family day care home and shall supervise the children at all times.

G. The provider may not administer prescription or non-prescription medication to a child without written parental authorization.

H. The provider may not accept a child in care without medical evidence that the child has been immunized in accordance with the local health department's recommended schedules or the child's physician's recommended schedules against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, measles, and other communicable diseases as specified by the health department except when a child has not been immunized at the direction of the child's physician or because of the religious beliefs of the parents.

I. The provider may not admit a child when the child has a fever, a rash, or any other symptoms of acute illness.

J. The provider shall negotiate and maintain a written agreement concerning the provision and cost of care with the parent for each child in care.

K. The provider shall inform the local department for any changes that might affect the status of the registration.

L. The provider shall report to the local department any instances of suspected abuse or neglect of a child.

M. The provider may not subject any child to treatment injurious to the child's physical or emotional health.

N. The provider shall notify the parent when a child becomes ill while in care.

O. The provider shall keep records as required by the Social Services Administration.

.10 Limitations.

A. A certificate of registration is valid for 2 years from the date of issuance unless revoked or suspended.

B. The certificate of registration may not be transferred to another person or another residence.

C. A provider may not provide family day care at any time for more children than the number which appears on the certificate of registration.

D. A provider may not care for more than 2 infants at any one time and the provider's own infants shall be included in the count of children served.

E. The provider may not care for more than six children at any one time and the provider's own infants shall be counted as children served.

.11 Renewal.

A. The local department shall send to the provider an application package at least 60 days before the certificate of registration expires. The local department shall include in the package notice that the application is to be received by a specific date in order to allow the local department to make its decision before the certificate of registration expires. If the application package is not received by the date specified, the certificate of registration expires, the provider shall cease operation until a new certificate of registration is issued.

B. The local department is not required to make an investigation of the home before renewal unless the home has not been inspected as required by Regulation .07B, above.

C. The local department shall decide to approve or deny within 30 days of the receipt of the completed application for renewal.

D. If the application is received after the date set and the local department is unable to complete its decision, the local department shall treat the application as a new application and the certificate of registration shall expire.

.12 Suspension.

A. The local department may suspend the certificate of registration for a period not to exceed 30 days.

B. The local department shall suspend the certificate of registration in writing within 10 days when any one of these regulations has been violated or the local department determines that the health, safety, or welfare of the children in care is threatened. The letter of suspension shall include the reasons for suspension, the regulation that is the basis for suspension, the notice for a fair hearing and the method for requesting a fair hearing, and that the suspension may lead to revocation.

C. The local department may suspend immediately any registration it has issued upon a finding that this action is required to protect the health, safety, or welfare of the children in the provider's care.

D. When the local department determines that the certificate of registration is to be suspended immediately, the local department shall deliver the written notice of suspension when the action is taken and the provider shall cease providing care.

E. When a registration is suspended immediately, the local department shall make every reasonable effort to notify the parents of the children in care and to assist the parents to make alternate arrangements.

F. The local department shall reinstate or revoke the certificate of registration at the end of the suspension period.

.13 Revocation.

A. The local department may revoke a certificate of registration when the:

(1) Provider fails to meet registration requirements;

(2) Provider provides false information on any of the agency forms;

(3) Conditions in the home represent a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of children;

(4) Provider requests that the certificate of registration be revoked;

(5) Suspension period has ended and the local department does not reinstate the registration.

B. When the local department decides to revoke a certificate of registration, a written notification shall be provided 20 days in advance of the intended action unless the registration is in suspension. The written notice shall include the regulation violated, the notice of the right to appeal, and the method for requesting a fair hearing.

.14 Injunction and Penalty.

The Department may petition the circuit court to enjoin any unregistered family day care home from continuing to function or to impose a fine on any person found to be in violation of these regulations.

Administrative History

Effective date: January 16, 1984 (11:1 Md. R. 39)

§32D. System of registration established; intent of system.

It is the policy of this State to encourage the development of day care services for children in a safe, healthy, and homelike environment. To achieve this end, there is established a system of registration for family day care homes. The system of registration is intended to promote a high degree of flexibility in the regulation of family day care homes while assuring the safety and health of children who are cared for in the homes.

§32E. Requirements enumerated.

(a) *Definitions.* — (1) In this subtitle, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

(2) "Department" means the State Department of Human Resources.

(3) "Family day care" means care given to a child:

(i) In lieu of parental care;

(ii) In a residence other than the child's;

(iii) For less than 24 hours per day; and

(iv) For which compensation is paid.

(4) "Family day care home" means the residence in which family day care is provided.

(5) "Provider" means the adult who has primary responsibility for the operation of a family day care home.

(b) *Group size.* — (1) A provider may not care for more than 2 children under 2 years of age nor more than a total of 6 children of any age at any given time.

(2) The provider's own children under the age of 2 years shall be counted as children served for the purposes of this subtitle.

(3) If the Department determines that the group size provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection are unsuitable for a particular family day care home, the Department may decrease the number of children permitted in care at that family day care home.

(c) *Implementation of system of registration; purpose of registration.* — The Department shall implement a system of registration for family day care homes. The purpose of registration shall be to:

(1) Protect the health, safety, and welfare of children while they are in family day care;

(2) Identify family day care homes and provide basic technical assistance and child care information to providers; and

(3) Minimize the regulatory rigidity often associated with licensure.

(d) *Registration required; exceptions.* — (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a family day care home may not operate unless it is registered.

(2) A family day care home is not required to be registered if the provider:

(i) Is related to each child by blood or marriage;

(ii) Is a friend of each child's parents or legal guardian and the care is provided on an occasional basis; or

(iii) Has received the care of the child from a child placement agency licensed by the Department or by a local department of social services.

(e) *Regulations.* — (1) The Department shall adopt regulations pertaining to the registration of family day care homes.

(2) As applicable and to the extent practicable, the regulations shall be uniform with the regulations adopted by other State agencies as they relate to other types of day care.

(3) At a minimum, the regulations shall provide for:

(i) Minimum standards of environmental health and safety, which shall include but not be limited to provisions for:

1. Adequate and safe physical surroundings;
2. The physical and mental health of providers; and
3. Investigation of any criminal record of providers;

(ii) A thorough evaluation of each prospective family day care home and provider, to be completed prior to acceptance by the Department of an initial registration;

(iii) Biennial self-certification by each registered provider that all requirements for a family day care home are being met;

(iv) Reporting by the provider of any changed circumstances relating to the requirements, such reports to be made at the time the change occurs;

(v) An orientation to be provided to prospective providers by the local department of social services prior to initial registration;

(vi) Inspections by the Department to be conducted at each registered family day care home at least once every 2 years to ascertain whether requirements are being met; and

(vii) Procedures to be followed by the Department in response to complaints about a family day care home.

§32F. Informational pamphlet.

(a) *Preparation; update.* — The Department shall prepare and update as needed, an informational pamphlet for parents of children in family day care.

(b) *Contents.* — The pamphlet shall:

(1) Outline family day care regulations;

(2) Describe parental rights and responsibilities;

(3) Describe complaint procedures; and

(4) Contain the address and telephone number of the local department of social services.

(c) *Availability.* — Pamphlets shall be made available to providers for distribution to parents.

§32G. Procedural requirements; violations.

(a) *Procedural requirements.* — The revocation of registration, appeal thereon, and the enjoining of unregistered family day care homes shall be in accordance with §§22, 23, 25, 26, and 28 of this article.

(b) *Violations.* — Any person violating the provisions of this subtitle or of any regulation adopted by the Department under this subtitle, shall be subject to a fine not to exceed $500.

§32H. Powers of State departments not affected.

Nothing in this subtitle may be deemed to impair or limit the powers of the State Department of Human Resources, the State Department of Education, or the State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene granted under any of the other provisions of this Code unless the same are necessarily inconsistent herewith.